WEE MAGGIE AND OTHER STORIES

WEE MAGGIE;

BY FRANCES F. BRODERIP.

AND OTHER STORIES.

ILLUSTRATED.

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"WEE MAGGIE."

BY FRANCES F. BRODERIP.

"THERE'S papa!"

The speaker was a boy of fourteen, who had been kneeling by the low window-seat, with his head on his hands, intent on the perusal of a book.

"How do you know, Tom?" asked Alice, while she sedately turned down and tacked a hem for her younger sister, whose industry was somewhat disturbed by Tom's announcement.

"Because I heard the gig go round the corner," replied Tom, absently, after a moment's pause.

"That might not have been papa," replied

Alice. ("Lily, you are not paying a bit of attention, you must take neat little stitches, and not leave these great gaps between.) "How do you know it was not the butcher or the baker?"

"*You* would not know the difference, Alice," replied Tom, with superb contempt; "girls never do! But *I* know when papa comes home as well as Pepper does."

"But pwerhaps he wasn't in de tarriage, Tom," lisped little Lily; "pwerhaps it was Dzim."

"It was papa himself, and no mistake," asserted Tom, in a dogged tone, kicking up his heels very viciously, and digging his hands into his ears, while he went on with his book.

"It *was* papa," observed May, who had not as yet taken any part in the discussion, "for the carriage drove evenly into the yard: so I know papa was there; for when Jim takes it round I have often noticed he drives

in with a crash, and then a pause, as if he had gone over the curbstone."

"Well done, bonnie May!" said Tom, thumping her back vigorously, by way of approbation, "that's very neatly described for a girl."

"I don't think papa knows how his frequent comings and goings are watched," observed Mrs. Singleton, who had hitherto listened quietly to the conversation, as she sat in the bow-window, a little apart. "I had fancied," she added, with a smile, "that no one watched the difference but myself; and, after long years, it had become almost an unconscious habit with me. But papa ought to feel flattered at *your* attentions."

"I suppose, mamma," said Alice, "you used at first to watch for papa's coming home, and wish he was not always away so much; and now you have got accustomed to it, like other doctors' wives."

"I dare say the habit arose in the first in-

stance from that, Alice," replied Mrs. Singleton; "but you know I had so much to do, with all you young things about me, that I had hardly time even to miss papa."

"Don't you know, Alice," growled Tom, from the window, "that sensible women don't always want men to be tacked to their apron-strings? What do you think Leonidas would have said to his wife, if she had pestered him so?"

"As Leonidas was a brave man, and full of a high sense of honor," replied Alice, bridling up, "I hope he would have been too noble to be rude to a woman, Tom, even if she were not quite so strong-minded as most of the Spartan women were. Do you think Arria was a 'pestering' woman, too, Tom?"

"I think," said Mrs. Singleton, interposing to prevent a cross speech from Tom, "that (putting aside all the little classical byways into which we have been drawn, Tom) papa

ought to feel very much flattered to know how his children watch for him."

"Then, I am equally sure he must wait to make his best bow till he is a little less tired," said Dr. Singleton, coming in, "for this glowing May day and the dusty roads are enough between them to quench the ambition of a Cæsar."

"You have suppliants as urgent as ever Cæsar had, I think," said Mrs. Singleton, smiling. "Here's Tom, who has been teasing me for the whole of the morning, and hindering his sisters besides, about a new bat and ball you have promised him; and then Alice says, with a sigh, that papa had not taken her for a drive for a long time; and May has hung about the window for this last hour, watching to know if you were coming, that by second-sight she might discover whether you have got 'Paul and Virginia' in your pocket for her."

"And what does little Lily beg for?"

asked Dr. Singleton, taking the tiny maiden on his knee; "has Lily been watching for papa and his gifts?"

"Have 'oo dot any sucar pums, papa? and div' me a tiss, too."

"Kisses and sweets, too, Lilybud! You are a true woman, little one; and I hope you'll always get just enough of both to be quite wholesome for you, my winsome lassie."

The little fair child perched contentedly on her papa's knee, and picked her sugar-plums out of his open hand as daintily and deliberately as a robin picks up crumbs of bread. Lily Singleton was, indeed, a pretty little thing, with large blue eyes well fringed with dark eyelashes. Such eyes as these in children, so clear, so pure, and so frankly turned on you, always seem to me to have come so recently from their native skies, that they keep their kindred likeness faithfully yet. And childhood still lingered, and gleamed in the golden-hued tendrils of hair,

that lay in small bright curls on her father's breast. Years bring darker shades to both innocent bright eyes and light golden hair, but no change restores or improves on those dainty tints and charms of early life; they vanish as thoroughly as the bloom does from the grape.

"And now," said Dr. Singleton, "that I have pacified one of my petitioners, let me hear, in order, the prayers of the rest. 'Spake up, 'cordin' to your size,' as old Molly Pepper used to say, and let me hear your grievances."

"You know you promised me a bat and ball, pa, last week," urged Tom, eagerly; "and the Brimstead boys are going to play us next month; so, as I am one of our eleven, I should be glad of a new bat if you would give it me."

"Gently, Tom," replied his father, smiling; "you huddle your words one over the other like a flock of sheep! One good

reason quietly advanced is worth twenty all in one breath. I am going down the high street, after lunch, to see a patient, and if you like you can go with me, and we will call in at Rawson's, and look for a bat."

"Oh, thank you, pa!" shouted Tom, rushing out to vent his delight in less confined quarters.

"Here's 'Paul and Virginia,' May; so you may shut yourself up, and devour it for the rest of the day, if you like, as I suppose lessons are over."

May pounced on the book with great joy, and took Tom's place at the window, being soon lost to all sense of outward proceedings."

"Look, mamma!" remarked Alice, "there's old Peggy Hunter coming back from school, with her great silk umbrella open to keep off the bright sunshine. What a figure she is!"

"Old who?" asked Dr. Singleton, with a

somewhat disturbed look on his usually calm face.

"Miss Hunter, papa," replied Alice, somewhat abashed, for she had not supposed her papa to be listening, as he threw himself wearily back in the great armchair.

"May I ask why you bestow the elegant nickname of 'old Peggy' on her?" inquired Dr. Singleton, gravely; "her name is Margaret, but her scholars and all strangers address her as Miss Hunter; besides, *I* for one, and I am not singular in my opinion, should not call her *old!*"

"I don't know, papa, but every one calls her 'old Peggy;' she has an old face, papa, and she always looks very stern and cold."

"Her little scholars don't think so, Alice," replied Dr. Singleton; "there's not a tiny mite in the whole school who does not run to Miss Hunter when she is in pain or trouble. And if ever you had seen her cuddle and kiss them, with a soft light

breaking like sunshine over her quiet face, you would not call her cold and stern, or say that she is old! Do you know, my dear, that it does not seem so very many years ago to me when she wore a bright young face like your own, and was called 'Wee Maggie.'"

"Papa, you are not old, are you?" asked Alice, musing; "because if you remember her as a child, you can't be very young."

"Did you ever hear me claim the secret of perpetual youth?" replied Dr. Singleton, dryly; "even if mamma has the bad taste to look young in spite of her cap, don't you know that I cultivate gray hairs vigorously, as becomes the patriarch of so many full-fledged, gayly-attired daughters?"

"You are only joking, as usual, papa," said Alice, discontentedly. "Mamma, do ask him to tell us about Miss Hunter."

"I know all the story, Alice," replied Mrs. Singleton; "and, indeed, have known her-

self for many years. But I think it is a story that papa will do well to tell you, as a warning against judging by mere outward show."

"There, papa! now do tell me the story; you know I am the only unsatisfied petitioner, so I think if I have had no promise of a drive, papa, you might at least tell me the story instead."

"You shall have both, Alice," replied her father, dropping a kiss on her upturned face as he passed on his way out. "The ride after lunch, for I am going to Bromleigh, and shall pass the dingle; and, last time I was there, the lilies promised a plentiful crop. So I am going to take mamma there to-day, and you shall go too if you can make yourself as small and light as a fairy, to sit on the little seat; but mind, I must have no very big basket as well."

"Papa has not forgotten the last great load of flower-roots you burdened him with,

Alice," said her mother, laughing; "you must be more moderate in your treasures, childie."

"Forgotten it—no," replied the doctor; "nor Black Joan, either, I dare say. I expected the folks would ask whether we were on our way to an emigrant ship, with that huge wicker chest fairly bursting open with weeds and roots."

"Oh, papa!" cried Alice, indignantly, "it was mostly the 'Solomon's Seal' you told me of; and you helped me to get some of them."

"Cleverly defended, Alice," replied her father, with the door in his hand; "only don't repeat the offence."

"But the story, papa; the story!"

"The story must wait. I have a long round to-day, and the lunch-bell will ring, I hope, directly. After dinner, when we are all settled quietly for the evening, and the work of the day is over, I will tell you all I know about 'Wee Maggie.'"

The long bright May day was almost over, with its treasure of blue sky and balmy air, and the sun, having shone brightly and cloudlessly all the day, had now sunk out of sight, leaving only his lovely gold-tinted purple memories in the clouds behind him. The air was charged with dewy sweetness, and that exquisite sense of tranquil rest pervaded all which is so calm and soothing, and makes its influence felt sometimes even by the most careless.

Dr. Singleton's house was one of those charming dwellings that are sometimes to be met with even in large towns, not possessing any specific claim to elegance or style, but owning a beauty peculiar to itself. It was evidently not a villa built for modern requirements, and adapted to parties and balls, but it was a roomy house, exactly suited to the wants and pleasures of the large young family who peopled it; and it was clearly under the care of a skilful taste that made

the most of its advantageous points. An irregular bow-window projected here and there, and there were sundry alterations and palpably later additions to the original structure, in which, indeed, in the entire plan of the whole, the absence of any architect or of any special style was evident; but an artist would have thought it a graceful subject for a sketch, standing on its smooth, well-kept lawn, and mantled with ivy and neatly-trained creepers to the roof.

The evening came at last, after the pleasures and duties of the day. The long windows were open, and the family party were seated, some in and some out of doors, enjoying what they always considered the best part of the day. Dr. Singleton was usually at home and more at leisure at this hour, and was always ready to enter into the pursuits of his children. Mrs. Singleton had also by that time laid aside for the day the careful duties and toils that must fall on the

mother of every large young family. In the evening, with her husband by her side, and her children round her, she gave herself up freely to unreserved enjoyment of the little family gossips, home news, and innocent jokes, that make one of the great charms of our homely English firesides. To evenings such as these the heart of many a distant wanderer returns with delight; and the memory of such hearth-lights has cheered more than one sick and dying bed in India and China. Truly did a sweet singer say:

> "They grew in beauty side by side,
> They filled one home with glee,
> Their graves are severed far and wide,
> By mount, and stream, and sea;"

but the dear home-teaching, the prayers at the mother's knee, the lessons from the father's lips—those holy hearth-memories of the past — will survive all changes and chances of absence and exile.

The Singletons appreciated their pleasant home as much as most young people of their age do, and set a very high value on these evening hours. The girls ran races who should bring "mamma's play-work"—her knitting-basket; and little Lily, with great exertion and a very red face, tugged over a great footstool for mamma, and then trotted off to return with "papa's soos." It was always Lily's privilege to bring her father's slippers; and she considered herself amply repaid by the usual kiss, and by being enthroned on the kind knee that was never too tired to play Lily's pony.

Alice having arranged the produce of her afternoon's "raid" among the lilies, in their appropriate places, in flower-vases or garden-bed, now planted herself on a low stool by her father's side, and begged for "the story." May shut up her new book, and came from her nook in the ivy seat outside on hearing this; and even Tom came and sat with one

leg in the room, on the low window-sill. They were all somewhat curious to know what papa could have to tell about "Old Peggy," as Tom irreverently persisted in calling her, and how she could possibly be the "Wee Maggie" of his remembrance.

"Now don't prick up all your ears quite so eagerly, young folks," said Dr. Singleton, "for I am not going to tell you a sensation story to make your hair stand on end with horror or delight. I am only going to give you an unvarnished page out of an old doctor's every-day note-book.

"To begin at the beginning, as May would say, you know that many years ago your grandfather was the leading surgeon of this town, which then only boasted of three, and found them fully adequate to its requirements. I was his only son, and habit and inclination coincided with convenience, and made me choose the same profession. You know I was in Edinburgh for some years,

and, lastly, in London, and walked the hospitals, going through somewhat more than the usual amount of training for my future work. My father was a liberal man, unusually so for that generation, and stinted neither care nor money to fit me thoroughly for my task. Children, I look back now with regret at the little advantage I took of the means so lavishly bestowed upon me, but which had been honestly and laboriously earned during a long and conscientious life.

"When I had passed my examinations, and gained all the knowledge I could besides, under men eminent for their skill and honored for their humanity, I returned home to acquire, under my father's judicious care, the most useful lesson of all—the habit of minute observation, and the necessary experience. The first quality came but slowly, but the last I necessarily acquired sooner from an attendance on my father's very large number of patients. With him I

studied health and disease in all their various aspects, and with him learned, as the physician must, the different aspects of human nature under a variety of trials. In our case, as elsewhere, of course the majority of our patients were among the poorer classes; and were I even to record half the scenes I have witnessed, I could write a volume as touching as any of your favorite stories. But the lips of the clergyman and the doctor are both generally sealed as to the human frailties and sorrows they see, and with which, in the course of their duty, they become acquainted.

"To the poorer part of our patients we were sometimes summoned by the parish authorities, more rarely by the sufferers themselves; and very often by pitying neighbors, who knew that 'the doctor' never refused to go where he was wanted. To my father, the cry of suffering and distress seemed to come with an irresistible

force, that no weariness of body or depression of mind could set aside. After a hard day's work I have seen him go off again just as he was going to bed, in spite of my mother's entreaties. 'I could not rest quiet, even if I went to bed, Mary my dear,' he would answer, mildly; 'so I may just as well satisfy my uneasy mind, and perhaps relieve some poor soul's sickness.' If good deeds done in secret were rewarded openly in *this* world, there are few aged breasts that would have been so decorated as your grandfather's.

"When I came back, a thoughtless young man fresh from college and hospital, with a lot of new-fangled notions at my fingers' ends, and the witty speeches of the last few wine parties I had assisted at still ringing in my ears, I was not exactly disposed to run in harness with my grave, earnest father; but he was very patient with me and my follies, and a few weeks of quiet life with the dearest mother in the world, and a more in-

timate association with sorrow and suffering, aided by the life-long experience of one who had known much of both, soon taught me a lesson I have never since forgotten. I had seen, of course, a vast amount of suffering, and a multitude of poor; but in a large city the cases succeed each other like bubbles in the water, and each individual is soon lost sight of in the continual succession of human life; but in a little place, as this town was then, comparatively speaking, we knew and felt a more individual interest in each case, and came closer into personal acquaintance with them than I had done before. In fact, instead of each sufferer being No. 10 or 12 of ward A or B, they possessed names and histories in which I, for one, got interested in spite of myself and my assumed professional *nonchalance.*

"One night your grandfather was away from home attending some urgent case which would detain him for some hours, when a

summons was brought to me in his place from a Mrs. Hunter who lived in Hampden-street. It was past eleven o'clock, and only the man and myself were up in the house; but as the message was urgent I did not hesitate, and went at once, leaving word where I should be found.

"The houses in Hampden-street are large and lofty, for they were originally built by some of the wealthy merchants who founded the prosperity of our town; but they have long gone out of fashion, and are mostly inhabited by professional men of small incomes, or retired tradespeople. The tenant of the house to which I was summoned let most part of hers, and on the upper or third floor I found my patient. The room I was ushered into by the landlady was scrupulously clean, though but barely and poorly furnished. A bedstead, a deal table, and a couple of chairs, were all the articles in the room, except one which caught my eye by

its incongruous character with the rest. This was a large oak chest, changed by age into a rich mellow dark brown, verging on black, its natural color enhanced by a polish evidently the result of careful usage. It was richly and profusely carved in scrolls of leaves and flowers; and along the top edge, beneath the lid, was a label, bearing the words, in old characters, 'Truste in ye Lorde.' Of course I did not observe all this so minutely on my first visit; but I noticed it afterwards, till the picture stands now in my mind as clearly as I have so often seen it. But what *did* occur to my professional and practiced eye on that occasion, was the whiteness and fineness of the linen used in the room, which was of a sort and quality not usual among the better classes of my patients. You are laughing, Alice, at the notion of papa's knowing so much of what is properly woman's gear—but remember I had a very thrifty and particular

mother, besides a keen pair of eyes in my head, and the fact struck me at the moment, though perhaps then I should not have described it in the more learned terms I use now, thanks to *your* mother's able course of lessons.

"However, to return to my patient. I found Mrs. Hunter a person of pleasing manners, evidently well nurtured and educated, which her strong Scottish accent accounted for, though I believe she did her best to speak as much 'English' as she could. I was talking to her respecting her illness, when suddenly a small voice exclaimed: 'Yes, mother, I'm ready; shall I get the book?' and to my astonishment a little head popped up at the foot of the bed from a cot I had not noticed, and that curly head, all tangled and wild from its pillow, was speedily followed by a small body in a white night-gown, that crawled on the bed and perched itself on the pillow beside my

patient. The little creature was evidently not half awake, for its wee warm red hands still rubbed vigorously at its rebellious eyes, which were very hard to get open.

"'It's only my wee Maggie, sir," said the invalid, with a faint smile; 'my puir wee lassie. I'm whiles afraid it's sorely selfish o' me to rouse the bairn sae often out o' her needfu' rest, but I canna always help it, and the nichts are sae lang the noo. Maggie, my doo, gang back till your cot, I'm no needin' ye, my sweetie.'

"The little thing now roused up, glanced at me in great dismay, then at her mother, and, lastly, crept carefully off to her bed, keeping as far away from me as she could, and, by doing so, being obliged to get in at the foot, where she remained huddled up in the bedclothes, staring at me with a pair of very bright eyes, from which sleep seemed effectually banished.

"I made one or two efforts to make ac-

quaintance with her, but without avail, for the little bundle still crouched immovable, while the bright eyes stared at me with the same unwinking gaze.

"'I dinna hae the wee thing to sleep wi' me, sir,' said the poor mother, wearily; 'though I wad be richt glad to touch her sma' hands or her footies even in the lang nicht season when I am by my lane; but it is mair healthsome for her to sleep awa' frae me.'

"I agreed with her motherly prudence; and, after prescribing some simple remedies to ease her for the time, promised to call early next day and study her case more carefully, when I had heard my father's opinion upon it, for he had attended her for some weeks previously. I then left her with the little watchful mute, who gazed after me to the door.

"On consulting my father, I found his opinion agreed with my own, and that the

"I AM NOT GOING TO TELL YOU A SENSATION STORY."

case was not one that promised earthly cure, or could find any other help than temporary alleviation.

"'It's my opinion, Charlie,' added my father, "that the mind's been the traitor to the body there, and that now the malady is past hope, even were the first cause remediable.'

"'What do you think her trouble can be?' I inquired; 'the room is scantily furnished, but there is no actual want, or even appearance of need. By the way, what is her husband?'

"'A commercial traveller, I believe,' answered my father, 'but I have never seen him; in fact, I don't know very much of her, poor soul! for she is almost a new patient, and does not seem to be very communicative. But, Charlie, there's many a trouble beyond bodily wants harder to get at, and still more difficult to cure, and sometimes only to be healed by the Great Phy-

sician Himself. These cases are beyond my province and my power; the sick in body I can at any rate try to relieve, and the hungry sick your mother cures with her "kitchen physics" as much as she can; but some of these exceptional cases make my heart ache!'

"I was still more interested in my patient from my father's hints, and readily undertook her case entirely, only bargaining for his opinion and assistance at need. When I called again I lingered awhile after my professional inquiries were over, and asked for my little acquaintance of the night before, 'Wee Maggie.' The invalid smiled more brightly than she had yet done, and told me she was gone out for a little play with a companion, adding, that she was loth to keep her too closely in that sick-room. I inquired if she was not afraid to trust her alone to chance companionship. The mother looked grave, and replied: 'I hae striven, sir, to

bring her up in the ways of the Lord, and to mak' her ken the differ o' gude an evil; and I maun trust her in His hands for the rest. She is a gude bairn, and no fulish, and I doubt na' but she's safe eno'.'

"On a later visit, I found 'wee Maggie' at home, perched on a high stool, knitting a stocking, and made a more favorable impression on her than on my first call. She even vouchsafed to stand by me, and let me stroke her soft brown hair; and at last became so intimate, as to try and teach me to knit. I need not say that her attempt did not succeed, but it resulted in a good deal of fun, a great entanglement of worsted, and, I think, still more in opening her mother's heart to me a little more; so that one day, when I had called upon her, and 'wee Maggie' was out, she related her simple history.

"She was the only surviving daughter of an old Scottish couple, who had seen two or three promising little blossoms fade in their

cradles; so that this last child of their later years was beloved with a deeper and more tender affection. Her father was the captain and part-owner of a small merchant vessel trading with Russia, and was comfortably off in worldly means. He built a little cottage in the midst of a pleasant garden that overlooked St. Andrew's Bay, and here the family dwelt in peace for many years. The thrifty parents gave their daughter the best education they could, and every advantage that lay in their reach. Scottish people, as a rule, are generally very well educated; there is not so much superficial ornament and accomplishment, perhaps, as in our course of instruction, but the useful knowledge of life is more solidly and substantially grounded. The quiet lassie was also a frequent visitor at the manse, and a sworn crony of the minister's daughters, from whom she acquired imperceptibly somewhat more refinement of manner than she

could otherwise have obtained in those remote parts. It must have been a happy young life, for the mere recollection of it brought a bright soft flush to the sick woman's face, that lit up features I now saw must once have been delicate and pretty. It was quite touching to hear her speak of her childhood. She was, evidently, of a reserved temperament naturally; but now, that she once 'opened her mind' to me, the tide of memory seemed to rush on like a flood of light pouring into a dark room, and touching every minute corner with its radiance.

"Poor thing! she had at last become acquainted with sorrow; and indeed it seemed to have 'made its abode with her,' ever since the 'Bonnie Lassie,' her father's vessel, had gone down one dark night at sea, and all hands had perished. The desolate mother and child missed sorely the strong arm that had hitherto protected and shielded them,

and perhaps really needed yet more the wisdom that had kept them so safe from harm. They had enough to live upon—the carefully hoarded gains of the hardy seaman, who had, through long days of harassing toil, and dreary nights of watching, esteemed all troubles light for the sake of his dear ones. He now slept peacefully enough in his ocean grave, while those he had cared for so well were drawing unconsciously near to their time of trouble. Jessie Cameron was a pretty girl, and, as I said before, possessed a good deal of education for her rank in life. She had, besides, the native gift of singing Scottish ballads in the sweetest voice in the world. I could, of course, only judge from the little ditties I heard her hum over, or rather 'croon,' as she called it, for 'wee Maggie's' amusement; but from these isolated scraps even, I have no doubt her singing had indeed been exquisite. There was all the charm of expression, the most touch-

ing pathos, and a voice that was near akin to a blackbird's for sweetness and flexibility.

"Consequently, Jessie soon had a wooer —sooner, no doubt, than if the keen-eyed old sea captain had lived to 'look through' the suitor with one of his glances. Mrs. Cameron was a gentle, good woman, but not possessed of any strong character; indeed, she leaned for advice and help upon Jessie, when the honored husband, whose will had been her law, was taken from her. Jessie was young and inexperienced, and full of the guileless simplicity of childhood, which takes upon trust all that it is told. Accordingly, when John Hunter, a young commercial traveller, met her at a neighbor's house, and paid her great attention, she was ready enough to believe that he sought her for her own sake, and not for the 'tocher' she was known to possess. So, in the auld kirk where her family had worshipped, and whose kirk-yard held the graves of her sisters and

brothers, Jessie Cameron was wedded to John Hunter. Old Mrs. Cameron did not long survive the marriage, and died almost painlessly, and very happily, in the arms of her child. When she had laid her mother beside her long-buried bairns, Jessie's real trials began. Her husband, finding himself freed from even the shadow of authority, announced to her his intention of migrating to England, and selling the cottage. In vain did Jessie plead and pray, with many tears, that the home of her childhood, her own birthplace, so near to the churchyard where all her kindred were buried, might be retained as a heritage for her own child, a little new-comer. She entreated that it might even be let on a long lease, so that the real ownership, so dear to her Scottish heart, and rendered doubly precious by so many memories, might not be taken from her. But her husband put aside all her arguments as mere childish folly, and coldly reprimanded her

for self-will and self-pleasing. So the girl-mother, whose only hope of happiness centred in her child and her husband, meekly acquiesced in his decision, and strove hard to stifle the rebellious longings of her affectionate heart.

"Her life-long friend and teacher, the minister, who almost looked upon her as one of his 'ain bit lassies,' had vainly tried to interpose at the time of her marriage, and now felt doubly grieved to find his misgivings realized in a way hardly anticipated even by himself. But he had no power to help her, for the remonstrances he had felt it his duty to urge strongly on Mr. Hunter, both in his character as a minister of God and an old friend, had been politely but coolly set aside by the husband of his favorite.

"'Jessie, my woman, ye maun e'en submit; and as the Lord has seen fit to put this sair affliction on ye, I am sure ye will e'en

bear it like a Christian. I doubtna ye will find friends and kin baith in yer husband's country; and ye hae gotten your bairn to bring up in the same douce way ye were taught yersell. So dinna greet, dearie, we shall see you whiles, I daur say, when Maggie is grown a bit lassie, and can rin after the gowans. Ye'll always find a hame at the manse, and I'll watch ower the graves in the kirkyard.'

"With many a farewell embrace and last word, Jessie parted with her kind friends. Her heart foretold what she saw expressed in the good minister's face, when he blessed her very solemnly after the good old Scottish fashion, and, with the tears in his eyes, laid his trembling hand on her brown, soft hair. And they were right; they met no more, until they had both passed beyond that sea where partings and tears are over forever.

"Her husband brought her to England,

and, after some wanderings and unsettled pauses in several places, had finally settled her here. The nature of his occupation had doubtless inclined him to roaming habits, but he had found it very inconvenient to drag a wife and child everywhere with him. He therefore established them in the best part of the house in Hampden-street, in this town, and made his business journeys from here, returning occasionally for a short period. From all I subsequently found out, his was one of those natures which are not actually vicious or criminal in their outward actions, but which, to my mind, are the most dangerous of all, from their gigantic selfishness. He was what is popularly called a good-natured man, was fond of society, and liked to be universally popular. His business was peculiarly ill adapted for a man of this disposition, leading him as it did into habits of idle expense and low gayety. His wife's dowry was soon mostly frittered away,

not by any great extravagant sin, but by little drops of selfish faults. Jessie had kept a brave heart as long as she could, and a cheerful home for the sake of her only child, 'Wee Maggie.'

"English air, apparently, was not congenial to the little Scottish-born bairn; for although she was healthy and strong, she scarcely seemed to grow at all, and was literally what her lonely mother fondly termed her, 'Wee Maggie.' She was scarcely to be called pretty, though there was an indescribable charm about her that won all beholders. It was such a grave, innocent small face, seeming to be gifted with the more mournful wisdom of age added to the simple truth of childhood. She always realized to my mind the idea of the little maiden who was stolen by the fairies, and was kept seven years by the good people, returning with all the savor of elf-land about her. I used often to hum a

verse of the old ballad to myself, half unconsciously, as I looked at her—

"'Will ye come to the brae for some gowans?'
Spak the bairns as they played o'er the stane;
But Elsie turned frae them and answered:
'I'd rather be here by my lane.'"

"She was eight years old when I first saw her, and a very deft little damsel she was; she could read, and sew, and knit, and would perch herself upon a tall stool and do some necessary piece of mending with the most solemn gravity, which sat quaintly on her tiny features. The old minister's hope of kindred and friends had not been fulfilled for Jessie. She had, indeed, once visited her husband's relations in the metropolis, but the meeting had not resulted in any advance of affectionate feeling on either side. Mr. Hunter's mother, I believe, was the widow either of a rich retired butcher or cheesemonger, and his sisters had both mar-

ried thriving tradesmen. The simple Scotch-woman, when she came among them with her strange accent and homely ways, was despised as a vulgar creature, and treated accordingly. The ostentatious living and petty pride of her new connections were as distasteful to her Scottish feelings, but she behaved as a true-born gentlewoman to them, and ought to have shamed them into better manners. But Mrs. Dowlas, the wife of the Cheapside hosier, who kept her nurse and first-rate nursery establishment, turned up her nose in scorn when Jessie, after her usual simple fashion, pinned up her 'better gown,' and gave her child the customary healthy bath which both enjoyed so much; and muttered to herself, that, if her brother's wife could be so mean-spirited, it was no wonder poor John did not care for his home. I dare say Mr. Dowlas did not find a more congenial helpmate in his own wife, who cared not how she pinched her household in

necessary things, so that she might have cook, housemaid, and nurse, a grand drawing-room, and a new velvet cloak.

"And so poor Jessie was deprived of even the hope of kindred kindness. But one part of the old minister's prayer was granted to her; for if she had no relations to signify, she had a few good friends. Now relations are among the ordinary conditions of life—necessary things, like our food and the air we breathe; things that we are born to inherit—both of which common necessities of existence being liable to vitiation from outer causes, are sometimes the fount of health, and sometimes the source of disease. Our friends are the direct gifts from God, like a fine day, whose blue sky, with a calm tender eye, gazes with compassion alike on the just and the unjust; and they both, moreover, have the kindly knack of finding out neglected and dusty corners wherein to make a sunshine. So when dark

days of bodily suffering and sorrow fell on poor Jessie, her heavenly Father sent her comfort and kindness to cheer her on the last step of her way.

"By the time I became first acquainted with them the little dowry had been some time spent, and Hunter made his visits between his business journeys still more few and far between; and money, even from his own statement, was so scarce, that Jessie removed with her child and her few valuables to the upper and less expensive floor. I cannot tell, and I do not wish for the knowledge of, how John Hunter spent a handsome salary; but no one knows better than myself now, that but little of it found its way to the lodging at the top of the house in Hampden-street, where his wife and child dwelt. Poor Jessie! It seems hard in the twilight groping of this life, that we appear to pay so much more heavily and painfully for the mistakes of our lives than

we do for its crimes; but she is in the broad light of a better sun now, and knows more than the wisest of us can do why such trials are laid upon us.

"Among the relics of her earlier and happier days, Mrs. Hunter still possessed the carved oak chest I told you of, which had contained the needful *trousseau* of the young Scottish bride. Her father had picked it up somewhere during his frequent wanderings, and brought it home as a 'bonnie kist for Jessie's plenishing.' In those days it was the good old Scottish custom that the bride should bring the household 'napery,' as her contribution to the general home. In thrifty households the yarn was spun and stored, and subsequently sent to the 'wabster' for manufacture into the usual requisites for bed and board. It was then bleached among the blossoms of the sunshiny braes, where the falling dews and fresh breezes helped to

make it as white as a gowan, marked by herself in the owner's name, and then laid aside in lavender against her wedding. Your mother possesses yet, in the recesses of her store cupboard, some of the prepared stock of a maiden who now lies in a green kirkyard—having taken with her merely a shroud of her own spinning, which her own mother's hands had fashioned, while she left her pretty and housewifely plenishing 'to furnish forth other tables.'

"To this well-known custom Mrs. Hunter owed the few luxuries she yet retained when I first knew her. The fine white linen that spread a bed which would soon be a dying one, was of her own thrifty handiwork in those bygone days, when she sat sewing in her mother's pleasant garden, and gazed over the wide expanse of St. Andrew's Bay. She had long realized the painful nature of her disease, and its probable very speedy termination. Away from the home of her

childhood — separated from the friends of her earlier and better days—neglected and utterly despised by the husband for whom she had forsaken all—her child, poor 'wee Maggie,' was the only tie that held her to earth; and to her the heart of the mother clung with the tenacious grasp that holds the last remnants of a painful life. And the little thing repaid her mother's love with an affection that was thoughtful beyond her years, and which taught her to be the handiest little nurse possible. Mrs. Hunter was subject to acute paroxysms of pain, which mostly came on at night, and when she was under their influence she would call to her little girl to read her a chapter. Her early training had wisely prepared her for all the chances and changes of this mortal life; and so now, in her hour of need, she well knew where to turn for the sole comfort at last. In the utter stillness of the lonely night, the holy words which have brought soothing

and peace to so many sufferers, alone broke the silence, uttered in the soft, child voice of 'wee Maggie,' as she sat by the side of her dying mother.

"One night, just as I was going to bed somewhat later than usual, for I had been at a party, I was summoned. I did not go out often, for I had not very much time; and, to tell the truth, I had scarcely got over my grand ideas of what young ladies ought to be, and did not always take the trouble to shine upon the society of this little town. But this night I had escorted your aunt Emily to a sociable dance at a friend's house, and I had there met a young lady—a very pretty young lady, gentle and quiet enough—indeed, one of the most unassuming there; but, somehow, I can't tell why, I admired her very much, and we had spent a pleasant evening. O yes, girls, you need not smile, mamma knew her—indeed, she was there, too; but it is no use to ask

her opinion about her, for she won't say; perhaps she is jealous!"

"What was her dress, papa?" asked Alice.

"I don't remember, except that it was white, and a green spray in her hair."

"It was mamma herself, I know," said May, who had been watching her mother's placid, smiling face.

"If it was, May, she will be able to remember whether she wore silk or stuff, I dare say, if you choose to ask her. But to return to my story. I had been enjoying myself much, as I have told you, and with my head full of fancies, my ears sounding with the echoes of the last song, and my memory repeating the white dress and green spray that had so charmed me, I sauntered home. As I entered the faintly lighted hall, where the gas was always kept at a certain height, I saw the dim figure of a woman sitting there, awaiting my return. It was the Hampden-street landlady, and she came

to tell me that my patient was dead. I had known that this was the most probable termination of the case; but at the moment, and in my then mood, it shocked me inexpressibly. The woman herself was crying, and begged me to come at once for the sake of the poor child. In the haste of the moment, and the untoward circumstances, I did not ask many questions, even during our hurried walk, and certainly was scarcely prepared for the solemn quiet of the scene that awaited me.

"When I had hastily entered the room, I found my patient — *mine* no more — lying back with that peculiar fixed peace on her features which tells even the most careless observer, that no stir of life however great can ever break the rest so long, perhaps vainly, sought. For her there was no need to grieve or care any longer; but the most piteous part of all was the little bereft lamb, the motherless bairn, 'wee Maggie.'

"She had evidently been reading to her mother as usual, and calming with her little voice the last pangs the weary sufferer was to endure. As the pain had subsided, the poor mother had, no doubt, laid back exhausted; and then the curly head had drooped lower and lower, the weary, childish eyelids had closed, and with one little arm still hugging the old Bible, she had fallen off to sleep, holding her mother's hand; unconscious, poor little lassie! that the love which had hitherto been her sole protection, was being taken from her. Mother and child! the spirit of the one perhaps wandering in the fairyland of childish dreams, and the soul of the other enduring that mortal transition from all it has loved, toiled for, endured for here, to the eternity so freshly before it!

"'What shall we do, sir?' asked the kindly woman who owned the house. 'Poor child! I could not bear to touch of her, for

she'll find her trouble soon enough; but you'll know best, sir!'

"It seemed horrible cruelty to move her, but the necessary duties to the dead must be performed; and, therefore, between us we loosed their hold, and laid the weary child, half asleep still, and muttering a few unconscious words, in her own crib. I shall never forget my feelings when I unclasped the little warm fingers from the already colder hand of the dead mother, and thus became the unwilling instrument of separation between them. The landlady promised to sit by poor 'wee Maggie' till she waked, and to enforce perfect quiet. I felt she was the most fitting person to deal with her; and I left soon after, promising to call very early in the morning.

"This I did, and I found the chamber of death arranged and set in order. 'Wee Maggie' sat beside the bed very quiet, utterly speechless, with her little hands

clasped in her lap. She either could not, or would not answer; and her face was as utterly colorless as the linen beside her; while her hair, missing the motherly care it had been used to, was merely combed into a smooth, coiling mass, from under which her great eyes, still looking larger, gazed restlessly on all who drew near.

"I ascertained the husband's address from the landlady, and wrote to him; he had been long fully aware of the dangerous condition of his wife. In two or three days he came, very calm and self-possessed, using all the usual expressions of civility and gratitude to 'those who had attended on his poor wife,' but so evidently exhibiting no amount of real feeling, that even my father took an instinctive dislike to him. He arranged and attended the funeral, paid all the few little necessary debts (and they were few indeed) that his poor wife had incurred during the last helpless weeks of her life, and fulfilled

all the outward duties with a sort of comfortable self-righteousness that disgusted all who saw him. He finally arranged that 'wee Maggie' should remain under the care of the friendly landlady, in her mother's room, going by day to a little school near at hand.

"So poor 'wee Maggie's' destiny for the present was easily settled by the smart, youthful-looking father, who had but a few careless words to spare for her.

"I was not able to follow the funeral, nor was my father either, as we had proposed doing as a mark of sincere respect to the dead; for we were both called away just then in constant attendance on a very mournful and serious case—which seemed to claim a large share of all the time we had to spare from the demands of a very large practice. I used to come home so worn out with the day's duties, that I was almost asleep before I got into bed. My

father smiled, and removed a large armchair from my bedroom. 'My dear,' replied he, to my mother's remonstrances, 'the lad would not know the strictly necessary rest of a bed half the week, if you left that chair there. He still owns his need of youthful, healthy sleep; and he would sit down and forget where he was, till Mary took in his hot water next morning.'

"The first time I had to spare I went to Hampden-street, and found 'wee Maggie' out. The good woman's heart had warmed to the desolate child, and I believe she could almost have hugged me for coming to see after her. So she poured out all her sympathy and indignation without let or hindrance. To add to her disgust, Mr. Hunter had carried off the oaken chest, and all its valuable long-hoarded contents.

"'To think, sir,' said Mrs. Simmons, 'that the unfeeling wretch should take it away like that; and there was I, like an old fool,

had dressed the poor soul for her coffin in one of my old nightgowns, which was clean and tidy, and frilled, but was not so fine and so good as her own. For, says I to John, "the beautiful good lining as belonged to her poor mother ought to be saved up for the child; leastways, that's what you and me, John, would desire, if it had pleased Providence, us being both dead, or one of us, to afford us any children." And John says: "You're right, Sally Simmons, and no mistake; and I'm sure he's a bad 'un." I feel fit to write after the man, sir, when I think of it; and he so unfeeling to the poor little dear.'

"I was very glad to hear that the poor child was left in such good hands, for I felt sure she would have plenty of good food and careful looking after. Mrs. Simmons was one of those good souls who always remind me of the hens that are set to hatch ducklings. Owning no children of her own,

she was ready enough to bestow the whole anxiety and troublesome care of a most devoted mother on strange broods, however incongruous they might be, that often drove her to the verge of distraction by their wayward habits. This forlorn, solitary chick, of course, had large claims on her; and I have not the least doubt that the miserable pittance John Hunter paid at stipulated times for his little daughter's board, lodging, and clothes, did not nearly cover the outlay.

"Poor 'wee Maggie!' she had kindness enough, and her few little wants were supplied nearly as well as before; but the child's lonely heart ached sorely for the mother who had been her loving companion and tender friend, all in one. She would start up at night, Mrs. Simmons told me, and mutter, 'Yes, mother, I am ready,' and search half asleep for the old Bible she always kept under her head; and then,

when she missed the familiar voice and touch, she would bury her face in her pillow, and sob herself to sleep. She was a peculiar child, inheriting a large portion of her mother's quiet reserve, and rigidly striving to keep her troubles to herself. She seemed to cling to me, perhaps because I was the only one who still called her 'wee Maggie,' and talked Scotch to her. I used to call to see her as often as my busy professional life allowed; and the smile on her little wan face repaid me. She would nestle up to me, and lay her head on my knee, scarcely speaking or moving, with a sort of dumb grief that more resembled the mute distress of a suffering animal.

"One lovely summer evening I was returning home from an unusual quarter, and, taking a short cut, I found myself coming through the churchyard of the 'old church.' When I turned round the quiet nook on the northeast of the chancel, I came suddenly

"IT WAS 'WEE MAGGIE' LEARNING HER EVENING LESSONS BY HER MOTHER'S GRAVE."

upon a little huddled-up figure crouching on a low flat tombstone. It was 'wee Maggie,' learning her evening lessons by her mother's grave. To the desolate orphan it seemed almost the homeliest place on earth; and there I afterwards found she went in all her troubles and difficulties. The merciful Father, who appoints the ways for His little lambs, sends comfort after His own wise fashion, and so He doubtless did to 'wee Maggie.' His ways are, indeed, not our ways; and through a long life I have often noticed that the deep sorrows of very early childhood have a purifying influence on many after lives, not necessarily a gloomy one,—indeed, the most enduring cheerfulness often dwells there. But like the lingering light of a departed rainbow, you see the tears have been there, though the sun shines once more.

"Within a year of her mother's death, on one occasion when I had called to see how

the child fared, I found Mrs. Simmons in a state of crimson, suppressed irritation.

"'There, sir,' said she, thumping down before me on the table, as she spoke, a small white parcel, containing a square block of unwholesome-looking cake. 'The profideous heathen has married again, before the poor child's out of her weeds, and while the grass is still a-growing over his fust.'

"'Does he wish to have Maggie? has he sent for her?' I inquired, somewhat anxiously.

"'No, sir, not he! 'Tain't likely he nor his new bride is a-going to clutter theirselves up with a child. There's a lot of fine speeches in the letter, and thanks for my care of her; but idle words cost little, and I don't do it for the love of he.'

"And she proved her sincerity by her practice; for as years passed on, the payments for the orphan child became less regular, and somewhat less in amount. At

first, explanatory letters came between, saying that Mr. Hunter had a fresh young family, and could ill afford to spare the money; so Mrs. Simmons must be kind enough to see that Margaret took care of her clothes, and was dressed very plainly. To Mrs. Simmons' great honor, Maggie's schooling was kept steadily up; and if there was any change noticeable, it was that her clothes, though good, were plain, and, as the kind soul told me, with great pride and pleasure, they were made by the little maid herself. The thrifty ways begun and taught by her dead mother had rooted in a good soil; and the small fingers were very deft at contriving and arranging her small stock of clothes, so as to look neat and nice.

"I was a settled-down married man by this time, and had little people of my own, whose chubby faces made a great sunshine for me, as they do sometimes now, when they are not overclouded," said Dr. Single-

ton, making a pause, and glancing at them all; and do you know, when I used to come away from my own cheerful airy nursery in the morning, before I set off on my usual round of visits, a vision used often to rise before me of a little pale thin face I had often seen years before, bending over some bit of work or gazing dreamily on the far sky, at the top window of the tall house in Hampden-street. And at night, when your mother and I used to come and look at your little cots for the last thing, we used often to think of the solitary child I had first seen at her mother's sick-bed, and whose sleep was only watched by the Merciful Eye that gazes down upon all.

"'Wee Maggie,' by this time, however, was 'wee' no longer; and even I, on the score of old friendship, scarcely thought it wise to apply the old pet name to the tall womanly girl of eighteen, who was so discreet and sensible, and who seemed to have

lost all outward trace of the deserted child. Her father had long before ceased all responsibility and almost all care for her. His last letter had desired Mrs. Simmons to apprentice her to a dressmaker, when, having paid the premium, Mr. Hunter would feel she could then earn her own livelihood. The kind motherly friend of her early neglected years had chafed and fretted more than poor Maggie herself, while doing her very best to help the motherless girl. Margaret Hunter, however, quietly and sensibly laid down her own plan of life, and has steadily adhered to it ever since. Her father, she said, had doubtless his own wants and those of his younger children to provide for; he had secured her a maintenance in her younger years, and it was now her duty not to shrink from earning her own living. She ended, however, with a good cry in the arms of her motherly friend, as she thanked her for all her unpaid love and

care. She, however, naturally shrank from the sedentary life and ill-paid toil of a milliner. 'Thanks to you, my dear old friend,' said she to Mrs. Simmons, 'I have had plenty of schooling, and it will be hard if I cannot turn it to some account. I don't care how hard I work. I shall at least be no burden to any one, and I shall enjoy a little leisure all the more.'

"Mrs. Simmons, in most of her perplexities respecting 'wee Maggie,' had always turned to my father and myself for advice. Your grandfather had been dead a year or two, and I had, in the midst of my busy life and professional cares, almost lost sight of the old acquaintance who needed me no more, when I was told that a person wished to see me. Somewhat to my surprise, my old friend 'wee Maggie,' now a sedate, neatly-attired damsel, entered, and introduced herself with a quiet, simple manner that recalled the dead mother she had so

dearly missed. She told me that the post of mistress to the infant-school was vacant, and modestly stated her qualifications and hopes of being elected to the situation. She spoke gently of the necessity of her obtaining some employment, and of her father's opinion; but added, that she thought she could undertake the duties required, and that the small, though regular salary, would be a better boon than perhaps greater, but more uncertain gains. I was much pleased with her grave looks and gentle manner, and the simple but straightforward manner in which she came to the point. I assured her truly that, for the sake of 'auld lang syne,' and her mother, my sympathies would be enlisted in her behalf; but that, judging from what I saw of her, I could also conscientiously say I thought her a very superior person for the office.

"By dint of a little influence, and still more owing to the favorable impression she

made herself, 'wee Maggie' obtained the coveted post. It was a very small salary, but it sufficed for her moderate wants; and I believe she has been a deservedly happy woman. She returned, as far as in her lay, the affectionate care she had received at the hand of Mrs. Simmons. A few years ago 'wee Maggie' indeed had a last opportunity of repaying her, for the poor, good-hearted soul met with a dangerous fall, and for the last months of her lingering existence was tenderly and unweariedly nursed by the orphan child whose deserted youth she had cherished so kindly. How 'wee Maggie' contrived to fulfil all her school duties (and every thing she did was at least attempted in good hard-working earnest), and to wait upon the suffering woman, I don't know. Every luxury her scanty means could devise, every comfort her short leisure could afford, with many hours stolen from her hardly won rest, were lavishly,

almost unconsciously, spent on her old friend. 'She has been another mother to me,' she would say, when urged to think of herself. After a tedious interval of pain, the poor woman went, as she said, to meet 'her John,' who had left her a widow some time before.

"And then poor 'wee Maggie' broke down for a while, utterly and entirely; her young body, so long stinted of its necessary food and rest, gave way when the necessity for action was over; and her mind, tried by such taxation in every way, was for a while almost equally weak. The death of her old friend had revived all the deep old childish grief for her own mother, and roused memories that had long slept. But by this time Margaret Hunter's conscientious fulfilment of her task, and her praiseworthy endeavors to improve herself, had won her many friends. We all decided that she must have rest and a good holiday, with her salary con-

tinued, to enable her to have the needful change—the trustees of the school paying a substitute in her absence. As an old friend, I took upon myself the office of adviser, and suggested to poor Maggie, as she looked helpless and worn at the idea of leaving, that she should go for a month to B——, a watering-place about twenty miles off, taking with her as a companion one of her monitors, a handy little lass of twelve. The arrangement answered famously; your mother took her there, and established her in a quiet room at the back of the town, overlooking a slope dotted with elegant villas and pretty gardens. Rest and sea-air soon set up 'wee Maggie' again, and she came back as gravely cheerful and work-ready as usual. Soon after the girls' school needed a mistress, and the vicar at once nominated her to the office. She had thirty-five pounds a year, a pretty little house, tax free, and all her coals. So now 'wee Maggie' be-

came a prosperous woman. She had never let her relation with her father quite drop, in spite of his selfish desertion, and wrote constantly for years to him. When she became able to earn her own living, little packets of her own work were constantly sent to the children of her father who had replaced her.

Mr. Hunter, I believe, has found that his young and prosperous days are over in this world; and with a large family, he doubtless finds it very much more difficult to make ends meet than when he first gayly laid hands on his Scottish wife's dower, and forsook her lonely child.

"The little dark-haired girl that has been staying with Miss Hunter for the last two months is their father's youngest child; and she will, I dare say, remain with her for some length of time. So 'wee Maggie' is wisely wiping away old neglects in the sense of new kindnesses, and carrying out the

gentle teaching she learned by the side of her own mother's death-bed."

"And is that all, papa?" asked Alice.

"All, Alice?" replied her father, laughingly. "What more did you want, eh? A fairy prince in velvet and feathers, coming in a coach-and-six to carry off 'wee Maggie,' like the heroine of one of your favorite old stories?"

"No, indeed, papa," said Alice, bridling demurely. "I have done with fairy tales, you know; it is only May who cares about them, and *she* is a great deal too old for them now."

"Ah, ha! my little daughter is grown, *she* thinks, to years of discretion and young ladyhood. I suppose you wanted the story to end like most of our popular fictions now-a-days, then; with an interesting curate and a gay wedding, with the school children strewing flowers—eh, Alice?"

"Well, papa, just living on in that hum-

drum school is rather a common-place ending; don't you think so?"

"I think, my dear, that if a useful practical life, full of hard work for others, and striving to fulfil its round of daily duties unostentatiously but strictly, deserves your epithet, why then the sooner the world is filled with such commonplace people the better."

"That Miss Hunter's a brick," said Tom, emphatically, slapping his hand on the window-sill; "and I'll be shot if I ever call her 'Old Peggy' again!" and off he went like a sky-rocket, after a bat he had just caught a glimpse of near the willow-trees.

"Papa," said May, "Miss Hunter is young, even now, then, I suppose?"

"Not more than thirty, my dear," answered her father; "but that seems old to you young folks, I dare say."

"I am glad she nursed her old friend so well," mused May. "I shall never look at

her again without thinking that she was 'wee Maggie' once!"

"Think what a valuable woman she is, May," said her father, gravely, "carrying the influence of her sensible, unselfish life about her, and, to a large extent, swaying the little minds of her scholars to the better and higher lessons she has learned herself. She is, I know, even now steadily improving her education, and employing every precious moment of her scanty leisure in gaining knowledge. Mr. Dalton, admiring her perseverance, has kindly lent her some valuable and useful books; and you would be surprised if you knew the really scientific and learned works the once deserted, half-taught child is now capable of comprehending and enjoying, through her own steady efforts at self-culture. To my notion, let me say, these things are quite as grand as even your peal of wedding-bells, and flower-girls, Ally."

"I don't wonder she looks grave," said May, "after such a sorrowful childhood!"

"It is that, perhaps, makes her look old," replied Dr. Singleton; "but her gravity is but a light cloud in bright sunshine, for her own sorrows have made her even tenderly considerate of the wants and cares of all little ones. But here is poor little Lily fast asleep; please, mamma, take her in charge yourself. And I think I deserve a kiss from you all for the promised story of 'wee Maggie.'"

WILLY AND LUCY.

BY G. E. SARGENT.

CHAPTER I.

I DO not think I could have been much over five years old; and my sister was certainly under three years, at the time my story must begin.

I have not a very distinct recollection of all the circumstances of the event I am about to record in this chapter; but I have heard the story mentioned so often by others that I seem to have it all ready to be written down, just as clearly as though it had happened only yesterday, instead of fifty years ago.

It took place in a hop-garden in Kent.

I mean, our mother's sudden illness and death took place there. It was a fine, bright day, but rather cold, as was to be expected at that season of the year, for hop-picking was nearly over. Our mother was standing at one end of a long bin, picking the hops off the stalks; Lucy, my sister, was seated on the ground beside her on a little stool, and wrapped up in a warm but old and faded shawl; and I had rambled away with a boy with whom I had made acquaintance, and was looking for black-berries in the hedge.

At first I was not so far away from my mother and sister that I could not see them when I turned my face that way; indeed, I had been told to keep near to them. But presently my companion, who was older and bigger than I, enticed me to the further side of the hop-garden, and then into an adjoining field; and there we rambled about for more than an hour, as I suppose, until I

remembered the charge my mother had given me. Then I ran back as fast as I could. I was not afraid of my mother's anger, but I knew she would be concerned at my long absence.

When I got back to my mother's bin she was not there, neither was my little sister. I did not notice then, but I remembered afterwards, that there was a good deal of confusion at that part of the garden, and that two women who had been in the habit of standing at the same bin with my mother were absent.

Nobody took any notice of me for a little while; but presently, when I was staring about and ready to cry, a young woman, whose name I knew to be Jenny, came up to me, and took me by the hand.

"Are you looking for your mother, Willy," she said, kindly.

"Yes, and Lucy. Where are they, please?" I asked.

"Your mother has been took bad," she said, "and has had to be carried to the barn; and Lucy is along with her. Suppose you stay with me a little while, Willy."

"No, I'll go to my mother," said I. And, snatching my hand away from Jenny's I ran off to the barn.

I may as well explain that Mr. Watson, the farmer, had fitted up his large barn as a sleeping-place for the people who came from a distance to pick hops for him. I dare say there were seventy or eighty in all, including children, who rested in that barn every night as long as hop-picking lasted. The men and great boys slept at one end, and the women and children at the other—a rough sort of a partition having been put up in the middle of the barn, from side to side.

It was not a very luxurious sleeping-place, of course; but it was made as comfortable as possible; and as there was plenty

of clean, sweet straw, besides such bed-clothes as the hop-pickers brought with them, there was no cause for complaint.

I ran off to the barn, then, when I heard of my mother's having been carried there; and I soon found my way to the bed on which she had been placed. The two women whom I had missed were close by—indeed, one of them was kneeling down and partly supporting my poor mother in her arms, while the other was dabbling her face and hands with water. Little sister Lucy was on the bed, nestling up to our mother, and crying a little, as though half frightened.

I was frightened too when I saw my poor mother's face, it was so pale and ghastly; her eyes were half closed; her lips were parted and quite white; her features were sadly distorted; and her beautiful soft brown hair was thrown back, hanging tangled and wet over the arm of the woman on whom she was reclining

"What's the matter with mother, please?" I said to the women.

"Go away, Willy, go away," said the one who was wetting my mother's face. She said this hurriedly, but not angrily. "Go away, there's a good little boy, and take your sister with you; your mother's in a fit, like; but she'll come to presently."

I did as I was told, taking Lucy by the hand and drawing her off the bed—that is to say, I did not go quite away out of the barn with my sister, but withdrew a little way off, and sat down on another bed, silently watching and listening.

"She's terrible bad," said one of the women.

"She's getting worser and worser," the other remarked; "I wish the doctor would make haste and come," she added.

"She was complaining only yesterday of feeling so queer and numby like; but I reckoned it was only with being cold. Poor dear,

how hard she breathes! Is she coming to, do you think, Mary?"

The woman who was applying the water shook her head, and whispered something that I did not hear; and then the other gently laid my mother down, and both stood silent, watching her. Then other women came in, and a great deal of whispering passed, until presently the tramping of a horse outside the barn was heard.

"Here's the doctor!" said one; "but it isn't much that he can do, I am afraid."

It *was* not much that he could do. He looked very grave when they took him to my mother's bed-side.

"Have you got any brandy here, any of you?" he said, quickly, as he stooped down, and placed his hand on my mother's breast.

Nobody had any brandy. It wasn't likely they would have. But one ran and told Mr. Watson, who was in the hop-garden, that some brandy was wanted for one of his

hop-pickers who was taken very bad; and he kindly sent a boy to his house with a message to his wife, and presently the brandy came. Meanwhile the doctor had taken out his lancet, and had opened a vein, but almost without effect.

I will not lengthen this part of my story. I shall only say that the good doctor was very attentive, and did all he could to save my poor mother's life; and that the women were kind, too, after their fashion. But all was of no avail—my mother died that evening.

She "came to" a little while before she died. She was unable to speak, so as to be understood; and she could not move herself at all, only to roll her head uneasily on the rough pillow. But by some means she made it known to her nurses that she wanted Lucy and me; so we were brought to her, and placed, side by side, close to her couch.

At first she looked very mournfully towards us, and big tears rolled down her cheeks, which the good woman who was attending on her gently wiped away as fast as they came. But presently a pleasant happy smile spread over her countenance, and her lips moved slightly. Then her eyelids gently and slowly closed, so that I thought she was going to sleep.

Our dear mother was dead.

CHAPTER II.

"AND what's to be done with these children?" A short stout, red-faced person in a pepper-and-salt colored coat said this. I knew him afterwards as the village shopkeeper, and also the parish overseer.

Mr. Watson, the farmer, shook his head. "That queers me," he replied.

There were three other persons present. One of them was the clergyman who had officiated at my poor mother's funeral. Another was the parish clerk, who stood at an humble distance from his superior, with the white surplice which had been worn at the funeral service thrown over his arm. It had been soiled at the grave; and the clerk was taking it home to be washed, ready for the next Sunday. The third person was the village carpenter, who had made my moth-

er's coffin, and furnished the shabby, threadbare pall which was past being used excepting at paupers' funerals. The conversation was held at the churchyard gate, and I heard it, because the men talked loud, and I stood not very far off, holding on by one of her hands to Mary, the woman who had attended my mother on her death-bed, and who, with the other hand, was leading my little sister Lucy. We could not leave the churchyard because the clergyman and the rest were stopping the way.

"Have you no idea where the poor creature came from, Mr. Watson?" the clergyman asked.

"She came from London, that's all I know," said Mr. Watson; "and I don't know that for certain, only that she said so when I took her on for the hop-picking, and the boy there"—pointing to me—"says so too. That's all I know about the poor woman."

"And do none of your other people know any thing of her?" said the clergyman.

"Not a word, sir. I have been asking them all round, and nobody knew her. She has not even mentioned her name to any one all the hopping time. She came by herself and the two children, the second day of picking, and begged to be taken on, saying she had had a long tramp from London after work; and should be broken down if she had to go further. So I did take her on, and there's the end on't."

"And the boy—have you asked the boy any questions?"

"Lots," said the farmer; and so indeed he had; "but, bless your heart, sir, look at him. A little shaver like that! What's to be expected that he could say? All he knows is that London was his last home, but that he hadn't lived there long; but where he came from before, goodness knows, the

boy doesn't." The farmer said this with some vexation, I thought.

"He knows his own and his mother's name, perhaps?" interposed the overseer.

"Not a bit of it, Mr. Chivers; nothing beyond that his name is Willy, and his sister's is Lucy, and that his mother *was* his mother; and you can't make much out of that, I think," said the farmer.

"Has he got never a father, do you think, Mr. Watson?" chimed in the parish clerk submissively, making a step or two forward to ask the question, and then falling quickly back again.

"'Tis a wise son that knows his own father," said Mr. Watson, half laughing; "but this boy doesn't know that he ever had one. So he says."

"'Tis a hackard job," said Mr. Chivers, the overseer (he meant "an awkward job," but it amounted to the same thing), "'tis a hackard job; hadn't the woman's clothes

any marks on 'em? or, wasn't there any thing about her, to tell of her name and settlement?"

"Not a shred; so my wife says. Her gown is a common print, and one of the commonest patterns going. There's marks on her under-clothing to be sure, and very good fine stuff they are made of—so my wife says—though thin and pretty well worn out. And her shoes—bless you, worn out they are too, though they may have been good 'uns in their time. Howsoever, my wife has had the clothes and all washed and cleaned up, and laid 'em aside, in case anybody should turn up to claim 'em."

"But the marks, Mr. Watson; you said some of the garments were marked," said the clergyman.

"With an M and an N, sir" (the farmer said a Hem and a Hen); "but bless your heart, Mr. Merton, what's a Hem and a Hen? Them letters mayn't stand for more

on them clothes than they do in the Church Cathechiz."

"No, no, the marks on the clothing mean something more than that. The poor woman's name doubtless began with those letters; Mary, for instance, or Margaret, or Maria, or Martha, for the first letter; and Norris, or Nugent, or Needham ——"

"Or Nobody, or Nothing," said Mr. Chivers, in a dissatisfied tone, interrupting his minister. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Merton," he said, "but you may make lots of names out of them two letters, and not one of them the right one."

"Very true, friend," said the gentleman, quietly, "but they will do to hang an advertisement upon, if the parish sees fit to advertise. But was nothing found on the poor woman's person? Had she nothing with her except the clothes she had on, Mr. Watson?"

"There was a plain wedding-ring on her

finger, sir, and a pocket-comb and a silver thimble, and a little housewife, and a shilling or two and a few coppers, and a bit of sealing-wax in her pocket; also a common hair-brush and some soap and a towel, along with a change of under-clothes, in a bundle that she brought with her. That is all, Mr. Merton."

"Not much to identify the poor creature and her children by, certainly; though the housewife might be recognized perhaps by any one who was in search of the missing woman. At any rate you have taken care of these articles, Mr. Watson?"

"My wife has got 'em all laid up in store, sir," said the farmer, "ready to be handed over to anybody the parish may appoint, when it takes charge of them youngsters."

"Oh, I don't know about taking charge," said the overseer, hurriedly. "It isn't settled yet that the parish has any thing to do with 'em."

"Nonsense, Mr. Chivers," said the clergyman, mildly, "the parish *must* take charge of the poor orphans until their natural guardians can be found. There's no question about that."

"And if they never should be found, sir? which seems the most likely thing, by all appearance," said the overseer, at which the parish clerk nodded his head energetically.

"Why, then, the parish must continue to take charge of them. Any magistrate will tell you that this is good law; and any Christian will say that it is good gospel."

"Rather hard upon the parish, though, sir," said Mr. Chivers, discontentedly; "and I reckon the vestry" (westry, he said) "won't like it. And I must say, 'tis *h*aggra*w*ating for strange people to be brought into the parish to die and put us to the expense of burying, and then leaving brats behind to be took care of. Poorsrates are high enough

already, Mr. Watson, as *you* know, without such *h*extra*r* pulls."

"Hush, hush, Mr. Chivers; this is rather uncharitable, isn't it?" said Mr. Merton, who perhaps saw that Mr. Watson looked angry. "It may be that the poor woman's relatives—if she has any, which I dare say she has—will make some inquiries after her. At any rate, our duty is plain, as a parish, I mean, to provide, for the present, for this boy and girl. They won't be much expense yet awhile."

"Which puts me in mind," added the farmer, "that there's some money due to the poor woman—leastways there was for hop-picking. It isn't much, for she was a poorish hand, not much used to such work I reckon, and she drawed pretty near all she earned, from day to day; but whatever balance there is shall be paid over to Mr. Chivers when 'tis settled what's to be done."

"That can't be settled till a parish meet-

ing has been called," said Mr. Chivers, still sulkily.

"But meanwhile, something must be done with these children," said the clergyman, pointing to my sister and me. "They have been kindly taken care of by Mr. Watson while their poor mother was unburied; but, of course, he ought not to be burdened with them any longer."

"As to that, sir, I don't so much mind their going back with the woman there to the hop-garden, they won't be in the way there, and the women folks have agreed to take care of them as long as the hopping lasts, and they can sleep in the barn with the women, and my wife will find them in victuals. But that isn't to say we do it because we are obliged, Mr. Chivers; and as to taking in people to hop-picking that we know nothing about, I should like you to tell me how we are to get our hops picked at all if we didn't do that."

"Well, well, what you say is quite true and reasonable, Mr. Watson," interposed the clergyman, who seemed anxious to prevent sharp words between his parishioners, "and it is very kind of you to offer to have the poor children looked after for a few days or a week. Perhaps some inquiries may be made for them before then. If we could only find out where the poor woman last came from ——"

"If you please, sir—if you please, gentlemen."

It was Mary, the poor woman who had led my sister and me to the churchyard, that said this. She, as well as I, had unavoidably heard the conversation I have recorded, and at that moment stepped forward and stood before the group, making a profound curtsy to each and all, not omitting the parish clerk.

"What is it, my good woman?" asked Mr. Merton.

"The letter, if you please, sir. The dear soul as has just been put in the ground ——"

"Her body you mean. Well?"

"Yes, sir, she wrote a letter only was a little more than a week ago. I went and bought a sheet of writing-paper and a pen, and a penn'orth of ink, at Mr. Chiverses shop, as he very well knows, he having sarved me with the same; and I wouldn't tell a story, gentlemen, standing in this place as I do at this time, and these precious babes alongside of me, as hasn't a mother, poor dears."

Having delivered herself of this mysterious speech, my conductress made another series of curtsies, and wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Oh, she wrote a letter, you say. Perhaps something may come of that, Mr. Watson. What did she do with the letter when she had written it?"

"She folded it up, sir, and ——"

"Yes, yes, and directed it and sealed it, I dare say; and what then?"

"'Tis the real truth I am telling of you, sir"—another curtsy—"she did them very things as you say, as true as if you had seen the dear angel a-doing on 'em."

"But what became of the letter? What did she do with it when she had written it?"

"I took it to Maidstone my own self, and with this very hand I took it into the shop where the post-office is kept, and paid a sixpence for carriage; which I did honest, sir."

"It was very kind of you," said Mr. Merton. "But do you know what was in the letter—what it was about?"

"No, sir, not if I was to be whipped with scorpions I couldn't tell, sir."

"We won't put you to that test, my good woman," returned the clergyman, who seemed a little impatient and a good deal

amused, "and I suppose you don't know to whom the letter was directed?"

"Not if I were to be whip——"

"But we are not going to do any such thing," said the clergyman; "on the other hand, I think you deserve to be rewarded for your kindness to the stranger and her children. But listen now: it is of importance that we—that is, the parish—should know something about the friends of the poor woman we have just buried; for the sake of these children we are anxious to know this. Now, if you could but recollect—think now—didn't you read the direction on that letter?"

"Dear bless me! I can't read print, let alone such scritch-scratch writing, sir," said she.

"And you did not show it to anybody, to ask them, out of pure and simple curiosity, mind, where the letter was going?"

"Not if I was —— I beg your pardon,

sir, for saying such a thing; but I didn't ask anybody, and 'tis only the truth I am a-saying, sir."

"Then we shall not get any further with the letter, I am afraid," said the clergyman, "unless the postmaster at Maidstone can enlighten us as to the direction. I am going there to-morrow, and I will ask him; and then—thank you, good woman, for your information, and please to accept this"—he put a shilling into her hand—"for your kindness to the children."

"And take 'em down to the hop-garden, dame, and take care of 'em there; I'll see to paying you for loss of time," added the farmer.

"And here's som'at for you to suck, young uns," said the shopkeeper, putting a peppermint lozenge into my sister's little hand and mine.

At the same time room was made for us to pass.

In the few days that followed while the hop-picking lasted, my sister and I were made much of by the poor hop-pickers. We were carefully watched and sheltered from the weather through the day, and plentifully fed; and at night we were taken care of in the barn.

Then came the last day of hop-picking, and the removal of the bins, the packing up of the hop-pickers' bundles, the gathering together of families, the final settlement of all balances due, and the saying good-by till another year came round. Some went east and some west, some north and some south, while my sister and I remained in the deserted barn.

Not for long, however. Almost as soon as the last of the hop-pickers had departed, the good-natured farmer took Lucy and me by the hand, and led us away to his house, where he left us with Mrs. Watson, who had previously taken notice of us in the hop-garden.

She was a little, thin, elderly lady, I remember, with quick bright eyes and a rather sharp voice, that made me almost afraid of her. But, in spite of her keen eyes and sharp voice, the farmer's wife treated us pleasantly, taking Lucy on her lap, and smoothing down her hair, while she talked to her and to me.

I have reason to remember that time; for it was then that I was parted from my sister. And I may as well say here as any where that Lucy's pretty face and engaging manners, as a child, had much to do with this separation. I have spoken of my poor mother's beautiful soft brown hair. Well, Lucy's was just like it. Besides this, my sister had gentle, blue eyes, and a pretty little mouth and chin. She does not wish me to mention these things, I know; but I must tell my story (and hers) in my own way.

What means had been used after the day

of my mother's funeral for finding out my mother's friends, I can only guess; but it is certain that they had been ineffectual, and that the time was come for us to "fall upon the parish," in spite of Mr. Chiver's reluctance to admit our claim. I suppose there had been a parish meeting called to decide upon this important question; but all I can be quite sure of is, that Mrs. Watson presently asked my little sister, whom she was fondling, as I have just said, whether she would like to stay and live with her?

"I want my mother," said Lucy, sadly, and lifting her soft blue eyes, which were swimming with tears, to the good woman's face.

"Pretty little darling," said the farmer's wife, soothingly; "your mother is gone to heaven, and you will never see her again in this world. But I will be a mother to you if you will be a good child. You shall stay with me, and I will take care of you."

"And Willy too?" said Lucy.

"Willy shall come and see you sometimes, child," returned Mrs. Watson; "but he is going to live where there are more little boys."

"I don't want to go away from Lucy," I said.

"But you will have to do it whether you like it or not," said the little lady, sharply. "Children are not to have every thing they want. It is a good thing for you that there is somebody to take care of you."

I was quite astounded by this sudden change in the lady's tone, and began to cry, so did Lucy, which seemed quite to surprise my sister's patroness.

"Dear me! What can all this be about? There, you needn't cry, child," she said, giving Lucy a kiss; "I didn't mean to scold. Dry your eyes, my little man, and you shall have a cake."

She gave me a cake, and she gave my

sister a cake too, and we ate them; but mine was seasoned with bitter anticipations. What were they going to do with me? and why was I to be separated from Lucy?

It was almost a relief to me when the good-natured farmer came back again, and offered to take me for a walk.

"Sha'n't Lucy go too?" I asked.

No, Lucy wasn't to go. Her little legs were tired. She might stay and play with the kitten (there was one in the room); and she should be taken care of while I was gone. All this and more I was told; and being obliged to submit, I took the farmer's big hand, and trotted away by his side. I remember, however, that when I had reached the door, and was just going out, Lucy ran after me, and put her little arm round my neck, and kissed me two or three times.

NOTE, BY LUCY.—I remember that too. It is strange that though I cannot recollect

any thing about my poor mother and her death, nor about her funeral, I have a distinct remembrance of the scene in Mrs. Watson's little parlor, and of almost all that passed there to the time of my kissing Willy. I remember, too, what passed afterwards, which I will write down here.

The door was no sooner closed on Mr. Watson and my brother than the little lady (as Willy has written) rang a silver hand-bell which was on the table. This brought in a country-looking servant by another door.

"I want you to bring me a birch-broom, Sally; one of the new ones out of the store."

"Laws, missus; what can you be wanting such a thing for?" said Sally, opening wide her eyes.

"Do what I tell you, and don't ask any questions," said the mistress, rather angrily; and the servant disappeared. She soon re-

turned, however, bringing with her the household implement, which Mrs. Watson carefully unbound, and from which she selected about half a dozen long and slender branchy twigs. These she put together, and tied round at the thickest ends with a piece of new tape out of her work-basket.

"Laws, missus; if you beant making a ROD!" exclaimed Sally, horror-stricken.

"Wherever there's a child there ought to be a rod," said the lady, calmly; "and as I have engaged to bring up this child ——"

"Poor misfortunate thing!" ejaculated the servant.

"Hold your tongue, Sally; as I am going to bring up this child till her friends are found, I mean to do my duty to her; and if she deserves to be whipped, she shall be whipped."

I had a very imperfect understanding of this curious by-play at the time; but I had wit enough—baby as I was—to suspect that

I was concerned in it. Nothing, however, came of it, at that time at any rate, for the rod was put away in a cupboard, the broken besom was removed, Sally disappeared again, and the farmer's wife, taking me in her arms, half-smothered me with kisses.

The history and mystery of the whole affair was, that kind Mrs. Watson, having no children of her own, and never having had any, and taking compassion on my motherless condition, had boldly proposed to her husband to adopt me as her own. My brother attributes this generous wish to my infantile prettiness, such as it was at that time; but I think it arose from real kindness of disposition. But whatever was the cause, Mr. Watson willingly acceded to his wife's proposal; and that is how I became an inmate of Beechwood farm.

CHAPTER III.

"HERE'S the boy," said Farmer Watson to an elderly man in a white smock-frock, who was leaning over a wooden railing which separated the road from a good-sized flower-garden, beyond which was a long, low, rustic-looking house, with whitewashed walls and a high tiled roof.

"Oh, that's him, is it, Mr. Watson?" said the man, moving slowly, and opening a gate for us to enter the premises. "Very good, sir," he added, when this was accomplished.

"He isn't a very big fellow, you see," observed Mr. Watson.

"No, he isn't very big," repeated the man.

"You can make room for him without much trouble, Mr. Larkin," said the farmer.

"Yes, Mr. Watson, I can make room for

him, and should have to if he was twice as big, I suppose," remarked Mr. Larkin.

"Well, then, I'll give him up to you here."

"I'll take care of him, Mr. Watson," replied Mr. Larkin; "but won't you go in and see the missus, sir?"

"Not now; I am busy. I'll call another time and see how the boy gets on."

"Oh, *he*'ll get on, sir; he'll be plump as a patrick (*partridge*, I believe, he meant) in a week's time: you'll see if he isn't. We don't starve 'em in *our* house, Mr. Watson."

Mr. Larkin did not look as though he were starved, at all events. He was very plump indeed.

I had not done wondering what this conversation betokened, when Mr. Watson slipped out of the gate and disappeared, and Mr. Larkin told me to follow him into the house.

Mr. Larkin led the way first into a large hall or passage into which some doors opened, right and left. Opening one of these, he ushered me into a neat carpeted parlor.

"Here, missus; here's the boy," he said, and moving his stout frame on one side, I had a full view of a most extraordinary personage; the very fattest woman whom my eyes had ever, or have since then ever, beheld. I have spoken of Mr. Larkin as being stout, but compared with Mrs. Larkin, he seemed as thin as a lath.

This fat woman (who was also large-limbed and tall) was seated in a huge arm-chair, which was strengthened with various appliances of stout timbers, else it must have collapsed beneath her weight; and was making wonderful efforts with a set of knitting-needles, to manufacture a stocking, I believe. She laid this work down, however, when she saw me, and beckoned me to draw near to

her chair, which I did with fear and trembling.

Mrs. Larkin's throat must have been as fat within as it was without, for her voice wheezed and gurgled as though it had some difficulty in finding a passage.

"Come closer, I want to look at you, child," rumbled out of her mouth somehow. And obeying the command, I crept close to her knees. Dear me! I never knew till now what a little insignificant mite of a thing I was. I remember thinking, some time afterwards, when I first read "Gulliver's Travels," that I must have borne no distant resemblance to that gentleman when under the inspection of his Brogdignagian nurse, Glum—what was her name?

"So you have lost your mother, have you, child?" said fat Mrs. Larkin.

I began to cry, not so much at the sense of my loss at that moment, as from bodily fear of this very enormous old lady.

"Poor child!" she said, compassionately, and to my great astonishment, I may almost say alarm, good Mrs. Larkin began to cry too. I saw two or three big tears run down each cheek. She did not know this herself, I believe, till they began to tickle the corners of her mouth, and then she wiped them away hastily.

I must not indulge myself by writing down all that was said in this private interview (for Mr. Larkin silently walked away as soon as he had introduced me); I shall only say that this elephantine lady told me that she was the mistress, and that her husband (Larkin, she called him, without a Mr.) was the master, of the parish workhouse—that the house in which I then was, *was* the parish workhouse—that there were a few old men and a few old women whose home it was, and a limited number of boys and girls of all ages, who were being brought up there because for one reason or other,

they had no other home. Also, that there was a poor crazy woman, who lived there because she could not live anywhere else; and that besides all these, there was a shifting company of occasional inmates, some young and some old, who made a convenience of the parish workhouse when it suited them, and came and went pretty much at their pleasure. All this I learned in that half-hour's chat.

I also was informed on what days I might expect to have boiled beef and greens for dinner; and on what other days suet puddings and potatoes: and on what other days good strong soup; and how I should soon grow big and fat. Here I broke in—with a comic look of affright, I suppose—"As big and fat as you, ma'am?" which made Mrs. Larkin laugh till her whole frame shook like a rich jelly, and tears again rolled down her cheeks because they couldn't help it.

"What a funny boy it is!" she gurgled out, when she could find her voice. "As big and fat as me indeed! I hope not, for a good fifty years to come. I suppose you wouldn't like to be served as they serve me every night and morning, would you?"

"What do they do to you, ma'am?" I wished to know—for the old lady's kindly way had banished my reserve.

"Look up there," said Mrs. Larkin, pointing to the cealing, and then I saw for the first time a large square trap-door.

"They open that trap," she continued, "and then they wheel my chair under that great opening, and let down ropes, and hook them on with iron hooks to these rings in my chair, and then they draw me up, chair and all, to my bedroom above, with strong pulleys. That's what they do at night when I want to go to bed. And in the morning they let me down in the same way. I haven't been able to walk upstairs these ten

years. Why, the staircase isn't half wide enough. And how should you like that?" Mrs. Larkin asked.

I thought it must be very nice to have such an easy way of going to bed; but as Mrs. Larkin seemed to expect me to pity her, I did so.

"Oh well, it doesn't matter," said she. "I can manage to hobble about a little, only give me plenty of time; and now I think you had better go along with the other boys."

"Where shall I go, ma'am!"

Instead of replying to me verbally, Mrs. Larkin put to her lips a silver whistle, which I had before observed to be hung round her neck by a broad ribbon, and blew such a shrill, loud, prolonged note upon it, that I was quite startled. It had the intended effect, however, of bringing into the room a very slatternly woman, in a gray grogram gown, who grinned and made a succession of comic courtesies to the mistress.

"Here's a poor little boy for you to take care of, Nancy," said Mrs. Larkin.

Nancy turned half round, and honored me with a stare, and another grin.

"You must take very great care of him, Nancy, and be very good to him. He hasn't got a mother."

Nancy left off grinning, and screwed her mouth into a round O.

"Don't let him be put upon by the big boys," said Mrs. Larkin, continuing her instructions.

Nancy shook her head violently from side to side, till I thought she must be giddy.

"And see that he gets enough to eat at meal-times, Nancy."

Nancy altered the motion of her head to a succession of nods, which made me think that it must have been set very loosely upon her body. And then, without waiting any further commands, she seized me by the hand, and dragged me away.

I very soon learned that this new acquaintance of mine was the crazy woman of whom I had been told; and that the particular form taken by her craze was to be obstinately silent, sometimes for weeks together. She was a poor, harmless, faithful creature, and I do not think she was altogether unhappy. I am sure I hope she was not, for I respect poor crazy Nancy's memory very much. She was always very good to me.

I shall not make a long story of my early life in the parish workhouse. I may say, however, that I was not badly treated. I had plenty to eat, as had been promised by Mrs. Larkin; and if my bed, in the long room with the other boys of the establishment, was rather hard, at any rate it was clean; and as I had never, in my remembrance, known the luxury of a soft couch, I did not feel the miss of it.

Mr. Larkin, the master, was an easy-going,

indolent, good-natured sort of man; and I am afraid the discipline of the workhouse was rather lax and defective; but crazy Nancy was faithful to the charge she had received concerning me, and was always ready to protect and take my part if she thought I was being "put upon." In short, I soon became reconciled to my new home.

I have reason to suppose that good, fat Mrs. Larkin took a fancy to me from my first introduction to her. Perhaps her compassion was roused by the circumstances which had made me a workhouse child. At any rate, she very often sent for me into her parlor; and sometimes I had the high privilege of partaking of her tea and toast. What was far better than this, she undertook to give me some little education. I am rather uncertain now whether I had learned more than the alphabet from my poor mother. Under Mrs. Larkin's in-

structions, however, I rapidly learned to read.

There was one indulgence granted me which made my first years at the workhouse pass almost happily. Nearly every Sunday afternoon I was made as smart as crazy Nancy could make me, and dispatched to Beechwood Farm, to see my sister Lucy. I was in general well received by little Mrs. Watson (what a contrast she was to my fat Mrs. Larkin, to be sure!) and I was permitted, when the weather was fine, to ramble about the garden and fields with my darling: if it was too cold or wet, we were allowed to play, or sit and talk, as we pleased, in the large stone kitchen, where there was always a good fire. On these weekly holidays, I was always feasted on plum-cake and apples, with a glass of home-made wine; and when I returned to *my* home, it was with the anticipation of seeing Lucy again on the following Sunday.

Thus things went on, in this smooth way, as far as I was concerned, until I was, as I suppose, about ten years of age, and Lucy not quite eight.

NOTE, BY LUCY.—I have not much to add to this chapter of Willy's history, except that I have always thought that my brother was very fortunate in falling in with so good a friend as Mrs. Larkin. I remember going to see her once or twice in these early days; and how astonished I was at her great size.

My own history during the five years Willy has passed over in this chapter is soon told. Mr. and Mrs. Watson were good to me, and I was taught to call them "father" and "mother." The little lady (as my brother calls Mrs. Watson) had no mind that I should be spoiled; and I very soon had demonstrated to me what she intended to do with the rod. We were very

good friends, however; and after I had learned necessary obedience and docility, I was not often punished.

Sundays were very pleasant days to me, because of my receiving Willy's visits.

I may as well add, what of course will have been understood, that in five years of our history down to this chapter, no intelligence had been gained respecting our mother's friends, and that the expectation of our ever being claimed was almost entirely abandoned.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I was about ten years old, the workhouse opened its doors to a new inhabitant—a pauper, of course. His name was Lawrence Brisco; and, when I first knew him, he was, I suppose, sixty years of age, and a tall, feeble, thin, broken down old man.

For fifteen years he had been the village schoolmaster, until his health gave way, so that he was no longer able to fulfil its duties; and then he had no resources left but to take refuge for the remainder of his life in the parish workhouse.

One day, soon after Lawrence Brisco's first appearance at the workhouse as his home, he was seated on a bench on the sunny side of the yard in which the boys were sometimes permitted to play. Present-

ly the old man caught my eye, and beckoned me to him.

"I want to talk to you," he said, in feeble tones, when I had obeyed his call. "I have heard all about you," he added, "and I want to make a friend of you. Will you let me?"

I told him that I was quite willing to be his friend, if that would do him any good.

"It will do me good," he said, with a sigh; "for I feel very lonely." Then he began to tell me some of his past history, which was a very sad and melancholy one; for he was born to a large estate, and had received a college education in his youth; but had come to poverty and disgrace by his own misdoings This was his story, and he ended by saying that he wished he had died when he was a child.

"Oh, please don't say so, Mr. Brisco," I said; for it seemed to me to be a terrible wish.

"I do wish so," continued he, "because I should not have had the sins to answer for that I have now. I have never done any good in the world," he added, bitterly, "but a great deal of mischief." And then he bowed his head, and was silent.

"You did good when you were a schoolmaster, didn't you, sir?" I did not know what else to say, and I wanted to comfort the poor old fellow if I could.

"Do you think so?" he asked, looking up again. "I don't know about that. I did it for bread. I shouldn't have done it if I could have helped it. So I am afraid that does not tell much in my favor."

This was pretty nearly all the conversation we had at that time; but every day after that, when he was seated on the bench, I went to him; and, not to make a long story of it, he drew me on to talk about myself, and my own prospects.

And now, for the first time, I began to

perceive that my position as a workhouse boy, living upon charity, was not a desirable one.

This discovery was very painful to me, the more so that I fancied my dear little sister must despise me in her heart for being a parish pauper. I recalled to mind many little circumstances which half convinced me that she "looked down" upon me, and was half ashamed of having a workhouse boy for a brother; and this so preyed on my mind that I dreaded the approach of each successive Sunday, because then I should bave to appear before Lucy in my degraded condition. I did not care so much about being despised by other people; but I could not bear the thought of being despised by her.

Happily, this depression of spirits did not last long. I think that Lawrence Brisco saw what impression his conversations had made upon me; and he exerted himself to rouse my energies.

"You are here through no fault of your own, Willy," he said to me one day; "and you have nothing to reproach yourself with, as I have. But you will have to reproach yourself hereafter if you don't try to overcome your disadvantages, and make your way upwards. You can do it if you will."

"Do you think so, sir?" said I.

"I am sure of it," he said.

"How can I do it, sir?" I wanted to know.

"By good conduct and good principles. These are indispensable; but this is not all. A man may have good principles, and behave well in a low sphere, and yet never rise out of it. Now you want to rise out of this sphere of yours, do you not?"

"Yes, sir, I do," said I, with a swelling heart.

"Very well; then you must prepare yourself, or be prepared for a higher. You

have got good sense and intelligence, and abilities, or I should not trouble myself about you, perhaps," Brisco went on; "but you want something else. You must have more education than you have got. Ha! I know what you may be thinking about my education, and how little use it ever has been to me."

"I was not thinking of that, sir," I said, deprecatingly.

"Well, I should not blame you for thinking so; but education is like a sharp sword. Take it by the handle and use it rightly, and you may carve your way in the world; but take it by the blade, as I have done, and it cuts—it cuts the hand that holds it. You must have education; and when you have got it, you must put it to good use."

"How am I to get it, sir?" I asked, despondingly.

"I'll give it you," said the old man, lift-

ing up his head. "It will be doing something before I die. I'll give it you."

And he was as good as his word. He had a few old school-books with him, and by some means or other he obtained more as they were wanted; and he set to in earnest to "make a man" of me, as he said. I am afraid I was a dull scholar at first; but my ambition was fired, and I was determined not to be daunted by difficulties.

NOTE, BY LUCY.—It is very good of Willy not to write harshly of me in this chapter. I have to reproach myself for having given him reason to think that I had learned almost to despise my poor brother, only because he was a workhouse boy, not choosing to remember that I was as much living on charity as he was.

And though Willy is so forbearing as not to mention it, there is no reason why I should keep the same silence; and I *will*

say that, on one occasion especially, I behaved so haughtily to my poor brother, when he came as usual to see me, that he went away from Beechwood Farm quite broken-hearted. He did not mind others sneering at him, he said, but he could not bear it from me.

My own little history, down to the time to which Willy has brought his, may be told in a few words. No near relations could have been kinder to me than were Mr. and Mrs. Watson. I was never made painfully to feel my dependence, while I was given to understand that they charged themselves with my future welfare. They did not mean that I should grow up to be a fine lady, they said, any more than they wished me to look forward to getting a living by common service. I was taught every thing useful, therefore, and Mrs. Watson, who had had a higher kind of education than most farmers' wives of those days,

undertook to teach me what her plainer husband laughingly called "fallals and fillagrees." It might be, she said, that I should be glad to go out into the world as a governess when I was old enough, and it should not be her fault if I were not fit for such a situation.

CHAPTER V.

ONE day, when I was supposed to be about fourteen years old, I was told that I was wanted in the parlor, and was accordingly brought in from the garden, where I had been at work since early morning.

When I reached the parlor, I found there (besides the master and mistress of the workhouse) my old acquaintance, Mr. Merton, the clergyman, Mr. Chivers, the overseer, and the little shaky parish clerk. There was also another person whom I did not know—a queer-looking man, with rough grizzled hair, a beard of two or three days' growth, a pale, cadaverous countenance, and very rough discolored hands. The discoloration was not from dirt, however, but

the consequence of his trade. He was evidently a shoemaker.

I understood it all. As a general rule, and very properly too, the children brought up in the workhouse were not allowed to remain there after fourteen years of age. The girls were put out to domestic service, and the boys were disposed of, some to farm service, and some to ordinary mechanical trades.

I had previously been told that I should have to "go a-prentice;" and now I saw before me my future master.

I cannot say that I was very much prepossessed in favor of Mr. Shillibeer, this being, as I afterwards knew, the name of the shoemaker whose home, I soon found, was in a back lane in the town of Maidstone. He was not a pleasant man to look at; and his voice was harsh and grating, though, in the presence of Mrs. Larkin's parlor guests, he evidently tried to modulate it. He had

also an unpleasant habit of *not* looking any person in the face. However, it was not for me to make objections which I knew very well would not, and ought not, to be listened to; and I expressed my willingness to go to Maidstone with Mr. Shillibeer on trial.

My little bundle of clothing was soon tied up, therefore, and I went over the house and round the premises to say good-by to my fellow-paupers and companions. First of all I shook hands with all the boys and girls, and I am glad to reflect now that, though by this time I had grown up to be the biggest and strongest, as well as the oldest, of that young tribe—those who had been my elders having, in the course of years, slipped off one by one—there was real sorrow felt and expressed when it was known that I was leaving the house. I do not wish to sound my own praises, and indeed the fact is, I never had had the inclina-

tion to domineer over the weak and comparatively helpless, so there is no credit due to me for not having done this.

After bidding good-by to the young, I went round to the old, who did not seem to care much whether I went or stayed. My parting with Crazy Nancy was rather pathetic, however, for the poor thing had grown to be very fond of me because I never teazed her, she said, like some of the rest of them. Last of all I went into the infirmary, as a certain room in the house was called, to take leave of poor Lawrence Brisco, who had by this time so sadly failed in bodily strength as to be scarcely able to leave his bed. He was sitting up in it, however, propped with pillows, and reading the Bible; for I am glad to say he had taken to that study, and found more comfort in it than in any thing or all things else.

"I am come to say good-by to you, sir?" I said, as I stood by his bedside.

"Ah! you are going away then, Willy?" he answered, with a trembling voice.

I told him I was, and also where I was going, and for what purpose.

He seemed very much troubled at the thought of my leaving, and he did not appear to look on my immediate prospects with much favor.

"It is not quite what I had hoped for you, Willy," he said; "it is foolish for me to say it, and especially to say it to you, perhaps, but it must come out; and I can't help it. It isn't just what I had hoped for you; I think you are made for some thing different—I don't say better, but different. You'll never be a good shoemaker, I am afraid. But I may be wrong, and I don't want to dishearten you at starting. And anyway, it will be some thing to start upon; better than being here any longer, though I am sorry to lose you. I shall never see you

again, my boy, I think," he added, and tears ran down his cheeks. He did not try to check them.

"I hope I shall see you again often, sir," I said, as cheerfully as I could, but the old man shook his head.

"You'll be away a month on trial," he said, mournfully; "and by that time all my troubles in life will be over. But I am not going to speak about myself," he continued, interrupting and preventing me from answering him. "Sit down for a minute or two, and let me talk a little."

I sat down, as he told me, and he went on—"You have some thing to begin with, Willy. You have the sword; take care how you use it. Remember what I told you once—Education *is* a sword; if taken by the handle it will do good service; but if taken by the blade it will cut the hand that holds it. You may think, perhaps, that the little learning you have picked up

won't be of much service to you where you are going. But it may be, and will be, so don't let it go, but increase it as much as you can by adding to it. It may be my fancy; but you won't always be a shoemaker, that's my opinion. But don't take a distaste to your trade, I do not wish you to do that; it is a good honest one, and a respectable one. Still you may turn to some thing else, where your learning may be of more use to you. So don't let it go, Willy."

I promised my old teacher that I would not.

"And whatever you are besides," he continued, "you may always be respectable, and even a gentleman if you will—a gentleman in the true sense of the word—such a one as I never have been, with all my lost advantages. What is more important still, I hope you will be a Christian, Willy. It is bad enough to live without religion, but to die without it——"

Here my poor old teacher paused for a little while, and his countenance showed such distress that I could scarcely bear to look at him. Presently, however, he resumed.

"Have they given you a Bible, Willy?"

I told him that they had, that is to say, Mr. Merton had. It was customary for the clergyman to give a Bible to the boys and girls on leaving the workhouse for service.

"I am glad of that. Read it, Willy, and attend to it. If I had done so ——. But I won't speak of myself; only I was going to say I must give you some thing to remember me by. There are three books I should like you to have; they are on the shelf there; bring them."

I did as I was told. The three books were a tattered Latin "Virgil," a French "Telemachus," and a volume of Euclid.

"Take them with you, Willy, they are yours; I shall never want them again. I

"LOOK UP THERE," SAID MRS. LARKIN, POINTING TO THE CEILING, AND THEN I SAW, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A LARGE SQUARE TRAP-DOOR.

must turn to this book"—he laid his hand on the open Bible on his bed—"for all the help and comfort I can get now. And now God bless you, Willy. Be a good boy; be a good man. God bless you! Kiss me, Willy, before you go."

I knelt down by his side, put my arm round the dear old man's neck, and kissed his forehead, his cheeks, his lips, again and again.

I am glad to think I did; I am glad to think I did. I am not ashamed now that I did it, and that I broke out into a flood of tears and a tempest of sobs as I did it. It comforted the old man. I never saw him again.

When I went down to Mrs. Larkin's parlor, all the visitors were gone excepting Mr. Shillibeer, and he was feasting on workhouse cold beef and beer; so he was in no hurry, and I had time to untie my bundle and put in the three books. They, together with the

Bible, made the bundle bulky and heavy; but had it been twice as weighty, I could not have left the books behind.

Presently I bade Mr. and Mrs. Larkin good-by, and I was on the road, trudging beside my new master, who did not offer to help me with my load. The world was all before me.

Do you think it strange that I felt sorrowful on leaving that parish workhouse? I did feel sorrowful. I had received kindness and consideration there, and it was the only home I had ever known. Others, I am aware, have written about the hardships and cruelty practiced on poor children in similar establishments, as they were formerly conducted under the old poor law. I do not dispute their experiences, I have only given my own.

I obtained leave from Mr. Shillibeer,—whose heart, or stomach, which does duty for the heart with some people, was warmed

with beef and beer,—I say I obtained his leave to call at Beechwood Farm, and say good-by to Lucy.

The darling was sorry I was going away; but she had not much time to speak to me, for she was taking her lessons, and Mrs. Watson did not like her to be interrupted. So she kissed me very kindly, and went back again, after telling me that I must manage to get over to see her very often.

Mr. Watson came in just then too, and shook me heartily by the hand, and gave me a great many encouraging words which did me good, and which I am glad to remember after the lapse of forty years, because I know they were genuine. He also put his hand in his pocket, and took out two half-crowns, which he gave me, telling me that I might be glad of them before long.

Having thanked the good-natured farmer, I rejoined my master that was to be, and we went on together to Maidstone. It took us

a long time to get there though, for Mr. Shillibeer had several calls to make at different houses on the road,—to "take measures," he condescended to tell me, as he left me to wait for him outside. It curiously happened that these houses had all of them signs over their doors. I have no doubt that Mr. Shillibeer did go in to "take measures;" but as it occupied a long time, and he came out of each house wiping his mouth and looking red about the eyes, and making irregular steps, I believe I am right in supposing that the "measures" he referred to were not measures for shoes.

We reached Maidstone at last, however.

Note, by Lucy.—All I have to say at the end of this chapter is, that I am ashamed of my past self—ashamed to think how I imposed on my dear Willy, so as to make him think I was sorry he was going away. I was selfishly glad he was going; not glad

for his sake, which might have been natural and right, but glad to be rid of the disgrace, as I thought of it, of having a brother in the workhouse. I had grown up to be *missy* and proud, forgetting my own position, and fancying myself to be a person of importance,—conceited child that I was. The truth is, I was half spoiled by the kindness I constantly received from my good protector and protectress at the farm; and if Mrs. Watson could have known how haughtily I felt towards my brother in parting with him that day, the best thing she could have done, as I honestly believe, would have been to give me a good sound whipping with her ever-memorable rod.

And yet I loved my brother; it is some consolation to me to believe this; but it was after a poor fashion.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN I had been a month at Maidstone, I returned with Mr. Shillibeer to the workhouse—my home no longer—to be bound apprentice to him for seven years, and he received the premium from the hands of Mr. Chivers, who will not appear any more in my story. It is as much a relief to me to get rid of him, as it was to him to get rid of me.

To my great grief I found poor Lawrence Brisco's bed in the infirmary vacant. His anticipations had proved true; he died about a week after I bade him farewell.

I have learned in the course of my life, that it is right and wise to "engrave benefits on marble and to write injuries on water." I shall say nothing, therefore, of the wretchedness I was made to suffer at

the hands of my master, the shoemaker, and at those of his slatternly wife, after they had secured my premium. Indeed, I have received so many more benefits than injuries all through life, that it would be worse than ungrateful to dwell upon the latter. Let them pass.

I served only two years of the seven with Mr. Shillibeer, for, at the end of that shorter period, his business, such as it was, was broken up, bailiffs took possession of his house, his furniture was sold, and I was told that I might go about my business, for he had nothing further for me to do.

This happened very suddenly and unexpectedly, to me at least. Had I been wiser I might have known sooner what would be the upshot of Mr. Shillibeer's so constantly "taking measures;" but I did not anticipate so speedy a release from my thraldom.

I could not help being glad. I hope I was not glad that my master was ruined,

but I was rejoiced at being free. It was a poor sort of freedom certainly, for I had no money and no home; for as to going back to the workhouse, that was out of the question; I would not have done it. It was equally out of the question my thinking of getting work at my trade; I knew scarcely any thing of my trade, and that is the truth. Whether this was my fault or Mr. Shillibeer's may remain an open question. I sometimes think, however, that my kind old teacher was not far from the truth when he told me that I should never make a good shoemaker.

And speaking about Mr. Brisco, I may mention that his last words to me, as well as the whole scope of his previous instructions, made a great and lasting impression on my mind. He had reminded me that education was a sharp sword, good if well used, mischievous if abused. I never forgot this; and, together with his sad example, it

wrought in me a salutary dread of misusing what little learning I had acquired. He had told me too, that I might be respectable, and even a gentleman if I would. I a gentleman! workhouse bred, if not workhouse born, as I was—a gentleman! I never lost the hope those words had inspired, and from the time they were uttered I determined that I would be, in the best and only right sense of the word, a gentleman—a gentle man. It is not for me to decide whether I have fulfilled this determination, but I know I have honestly tried to do so.

To return to my story.

It was on a winter's morning that I received from Mr. Shillibeer an intimation that he had no longer a home for me, and that I had better look out for myself. Accordingly I lost no time in packing up my box—after putting on my best suit of clothes, which were shabby enough, no doubt—and removing it from my master's house to that

of an acquaintance of mine, where I hoped it would be safe; and then I started off to see Lucy.

It was afternoon when I arrived at Beechwood Farm, and I had the good fortune to obtain a long interview with my sister alone, for I really did not wish Mr. Watson to know just then what had happened to me. I knew—at least I believed—that he would be angry with my late master, which I did not wish him to be, the poor man having sorrow and trouble enough on his hands already, without having a parish squabbling to go through. I knew too—at least I believed—that Mr. Watson would invite me to stay at his house, till he could find something for me to do, and I shrunk from this. My sister and I were already under such great obligations to him, that I could not bear to think of increasing them. Besides, I had by this time formed my own plans, such as they were.

So, as I have just said, I had a good long conversation with Lucy, who behaved very affectionately towards me, and gave me all the encouragement she could. She did more than this, she put her purse into my hands, with all it contained; and as Mrs. Watson had always been very generous and liberal with regard to pocket-money, as in all other matters, my darling had a good sum in her purse; I would not take it all, you may be sure; but I borrowed ten shillings of Lucy, and asked her to let me keep the purse as a remembrance of her, which she did.

Poor dear, she cried a good deal when we parted after our long talk, and put her arms round my neck and kissed me so fondly that I could scarcely drag myself away. I did this at last, however, and I did not see my darling again till many, many years had passed over both of us.

I returned to Maidstone that same even-

ing, and begged a night's lodging there of the acquaintance in whose care I had placed my box. The next morning, I started off on the road to Dover, with a bundle slung at my back, containing two clean shirts (my whole stock besides what was on my back), my best shoes, three pairs of stockings, a coarse towel, and my Bible.

The plan I had formed was a foolish and desperate one, now I come gravely to think of it; and it was one which I would not advise any other boy to try; nevertheless, strange to say, and I am astonished at it now, it did not prove a total failure. I had made up my mind to seek my fortune on the sea.

I had been knocking about Dover some two or three days, and getting well laughed at, or else growled at and told to go about my business, by captains and mates of vessels in the harbor to whom I had made application, till I was utterly dispirited, and

my little stock of money was almost all gone, when a very fortunate thing happened to me. I need not mention particulars; but I had it in my power to help in rescuing a French lad, about my own age, and respectably dressed in a sort of naval uniform, from a number of rough English sailor lads who were ill-treating him in one of the back streets of the town. I am afraid my French friend, who could speak no English, had been imprudent, and had been drinking too freely of English beer, and had somehow provoked the youths with whom he had met in the public-house. But let this be as it may, I was able to take him under my charge, and, having French enough to understand him—thanks to my poor old teacher—I discovered that he belonged to a large French vessel which, only the day before, had put into the harbor from stress of weather. Yielding to his fears and his entreaties not to be left to the mercy of "*ces*

polissons Anglaises," I accompanied the French lad to his ship, and then I found that he was the son of the captain, who kept me on board to dinner, and had some conversation with me, which ended in his offering (out of gratitude to me for my kindness to his son, he said) to give me a berth in the ship.

This was the beginning of my rise in life, for the captain was ever afterwards my firm and kind friend; and when he found that I was (as he was pleased to say) too well educated for a common sailor, and also that the sea was not, after all, my proper element, he exerted himself so strongly in my favor, that he procured me a situation in his own country, where my education was really of great use to me, because (as I hope) I laid hold of it by the handle, and not by the blade.

As it has not been my intention in this story to go beyond the days of my child-

hood and boyhood, I shall only say that by the kindness and honorable dealings of my friends and patrons in France, and by the overruling blessing of Providence, I was enabled to return to my native land, when I was between forty and fifty years of age, with a sufficient competence for life. In all that time, I had corresponded with my darling sister, and knew all that happened at Beechwood; but that I shall leave for her to tell. I had also paid several visits to England, and had enjoyed the hospitality of good Mr. and Mrs. Watson, who, for Lucy's sake, treated me as though I were a near relative, and a dear friend.

Concluding Note, by Lucy.—I very well remember that winter afternoon, of which my brother has written, when he came to bid me farewell; and I am glad to think that, at that parting time, all my old fondness for him returned with such an over-

flowing tide that I forgot, for the time, my foolish vanity. I remember, too, that when I told Mr. Watson what had passed with my brother, he was vexed that I had not detained him; and the next day my kind friend rode over to Maidstone to find Willy and to exert himself in his favor. But by the time he reached the town Willy was gone, no one knew whither; and we could not find out what had become of him until I received a letter to say that he was on board the French ship, learning to be a sailor.

After my brother was gone quite away from the neighborhood, I felt dull for a time, and indeed I had a rather severe illness. I soon recovered, however, and all things went on as before, only that the disinterested kindness of my excellent friends increased more and more.

And now I must reveal so much of my own weakness and folly as to say that I had always indulged a secret notion that our

poor mother had been a great lady, and that when she made her appearance in Mr. Watson's hop-garden, she was under some temporary cloud of misfortune which would soon have passed away but for her sudden death; also our father, whom not even Willy, who was older than I, had ever known, was a grand personage, who would some day make his appearance in much magnificence, to reclaim his children, and bountifully reward their benefactors. I cannot tell how many romances I had woven at one time or another, in my mind, but all tending to the same desirable consummation—that of our being raised from our lowly condition to one of great wealth and grandeur, by the unexpected turning up of our father, who was to be perhaps an earl, or a viscount, or a baronet at least; nothing short of this would suffice for my imagination. I believe that these foolish thoughts were first of all put into my mind by Sally,

Mrs. Watson's servant; and that their having taken root there will very much account for the disgust and impatience I felt at my brother being a workhouse boy.

And my day dreams came true, in part; our father did make his appearance, and (through the medium of the letter which my poor mother wrote the week before she died, and the little personalities which she left behind, especially her housewife) satisfactorily, to himself, proved our relationship to him.

But alas, alas! no rich, and magnificent, and glorious retinue attended him; and no grand gilded coach whisked me away to his baronial halls. It was a sad story he had to reveal, and a humiliating story I had to hear when he found me, which was about two years after my parting with Willy.

Our father was a returned convict, who, after a dreary banishment of fourteen years, had come home to England, broken in health,

but penitent I trust and think, to make up as he best could for the misery he had caused to the poor wife and children whom first his misconduct and then his crime had ruined. It is true he and our poor mother had once been in a respectable position in life, and he yet retained some traces of superior breeding; but he, like Willy's old teacher, had taken hold of the sword by the blade and not by the handle.

I will not write any more on this painful subject, except to say that my dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Watson received the penitent kindly, and gave him a home (for my sake, they said) as long as he lived, which was only a few months after his return. He did not live to see Willy.

As to myself, the shock was very painful, but it was very salutary, for it called my mind down from the high regions of fanciful imagination to the stern and sober duties of

life, and otherwise taught me lessons which I hope I never forgot.

I have only to add that my kind Mr. and Mrs. Watson would never part with me, so I did not go out as a governess after all. I lived with them till they died at a good old age; and then, as they had no near relatives, they left me their farm. When, a few years afterwards, my brother finally returned to England, as confirmed an old bachelor as I was an old maid, he took up his abode with me, and here we still live together.

LOTTIE'S HALF-SOVEREIGN.

BY MRS. RUSSELL GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

A FEW days before Christmas, a large family party of young people was assembled in an apartment of Stanley Court. The rows of shelves filled with volumes, mostly bound in those sombre coverings so familiar to us "when we were young," the maps suspended on the walls, the globes, the square piano, the monster slates on pedestals, and other apparatus, denoted it to be the school-room; but on this afternoon certainly no signs of deep study were to be perceived. On the music-stand, instead of

a grave sonata or intricate exercise, stood sundry well-known comic songs and lively polkas; the cumbrous slates were put into a corner, with their black faces towards the wall; bonnets and cloaks were thrown sacrilegiously over the celestial globe; while the large centre-table, in place of the abstruse histories, German lesson-books, and dictionaries which usually adorned it, was strewed with gay-coated books, paint-boxes, work-baskets, chess and backgammon boards, etc., in such profusion, that at a glance it was easy to discern that the governess was absent. And so it was; the monarch of the school-room had on the previous day departed on a visit to her relations, leaving her dominion, for the time being, to the sway of her pupils, who, joined by numerous brothers from various schools—boys full of glee and spirits—filled the quiet school-room with sounds of mirth and fun, and converted the usually neat apartment into a scene of confused

disorder, which would have shocked poor Miss Page, could she have seen or even imagined it, but which seemed very enjoyable to the young people themselves.

And now the short December day was fast closing in; the party at the table had no longer sufficient light for their various pursuits, so some of them gathered round the wood-fire blazing brightly on the hearth, and casting a glowing hue on the crimson window-curtains, making the scene within-doors contrast most agreeably with that without, the large expanse of lawn, with its snow-clad shrubs, looking like fantastic figures in their white shrouds.

Two little boys and a tiny girl lingered at the table, to watch, with unabated interest and admiration, the feats of a kind elder brother, who for their amusement had been trying divers experiments from that universal favorite, the "Boy's Own Book," and, by means of quicksilver, taken for the occa-

sion from a broken thermometer, and other decoctions, had just been successful in exhibiting a silver-tree, which, suspended in its beautiful branching shape, with the flame of the fire shining upon it, produced the most brilliant, glittering, and marvellous effect imaginable, drawing forth from the children shouts of wonder and delight, while they regarded their brother quite in the light of a magician.

In the mean while, those by the fireside chattered together. At length, Edgar, the eldest of the whole party, exclaimed, "Where can Lottie be all this time?"

"Yes," returned Lionel (the magician), "she promised to be in before four, to play our match at chess, and I am now quite ready for her."

"Oh!" replied Edgar, scornfully, "there is not much reliance to be placed on *her* promises. Depend upon it, she has forgotten all about you and your chess. Noth-

ing so trifling and unimportant as a brother and his amusements could fill the superior mind of an exalted individual, intent on reforming and finding occupation for a whole parishful of old men, women, and children."

"Oh, Edgar!" said Carie, "how can you speak thus of all Lottie's good deeds? How often I wish I were like her; as active, as strong, not obliged to take care of myself and stay at home; it seems such a useless, selfish life I lead."

"Not at all, little Carrie," returned Edgar, "for you are sometimes of use to me. I like to sit by the fire and listen to your singing; your voice is greatly improved since last half. In my opinion (and being in the sixth form at Eton, he considered his opinion decisive)—in *my* opinion, the first duty of every girl is to make herself agreeable and of service to her brothers, and to devote her time, talents, and enérgies in attending to them, and endeavoring to beguile

those tedious hours when they have nothing else to do than sit by the fire, as I am doing now." And after a yawn, Edgar drew himself up in a dignified manner, as if no appeal could possibly be made against this, his sage judgment of the case.

But Carrie continued: "Of course, Lottie would rather be sitting in this comfortable room, talking or singing to you, or playing at chess with Lionel, than remaining out of doors on this bitterly cold evening. But some sick or poor person has need of assistance, and she is so kind and energetic."

"And so injudicious and interfering," chimed in Edgar.

"Oh, no!" returned Carrie, indignantly.

"Well," continued Edgar, "I could forgive her all her fanciful, silly schemes, though I laugh at and thoroughly despise them, if she only stopped there; but you know as well as I do, the mischief and confusion she is continually making by her

meddling propensities, her love of managing things in her own way, without heeding the advice of those older and wiser than herself; taking people out of their proper places, and putting them into others which she thinks better for them; in fact, as I said, never leaving well alone. Can you deny the truth of this?"

"But," gently pleaded Carrie, "all Lottie does is meant for the best."

"Of course," replied the brother; "at least, I suppose so. But why should she set herself up to be wiser than every one else—a better judge than my mother, for instance? But, come, enough of this. Light the candles, Lionel. I'll play a game at chess with you myself. But, first, one of you youngsters," addressing the little boys at the table, still busy with the "Boy's Own Book" and their precious bottle of quicksilver, "pull off my boots, and run and fetch me my slippers. Why, what a state your paws are in, my

man!" as the little boy stooped to perform the required office, his fingers begrimed with quicksilver. "Now for it, Lionel;" and having settled himself thoroughly comfortably, the Etonian was making his first move in the game, when the door flew open, and a light figure came bounding in.

It was Lottie Aylmer, snow-flakes dropping from her cloak and melting on the carpet as she advanced; her long hair hanging in straight locks round her face, her veil stiffened by the frosty atmosphere.

"Pray, shut the door," exclaimed Edgar; "we do not wish to have snow drifted into our sitting-room; it is quite enough to have it out of doors. I am sure the glass must have gone down several degrees since you came in, Lottie; whisking about all your frigid petticoats. Do not come near me, if you please."

"Oh, Edgar," replied Lottie, "I am quite hot. It is so delicious out; the ground so

crisp beneath one's feet, the snow so pure and lovely, and the moon shining so brightly on every object. I have had such a delightful walk!"

"And where have you been?" demanded Carrie, as she assisted in pulling off Lottie's cloak, now quite damp from the dissolved snow; "it is late for you to have been out all alone."

"Yes," returned Lottie, "later, I fear, than mamma would like, or than I had dared to remain, if Miss Page had not been 'over the hills and far away;' but I had so much to do. I was nearly an hour choosing my Christmas presents; people were constantly coming into the shop and interrupting Turner. Then, after that," and she paused for a moment, "after that I had a very important and somewhat difficult business to transact; but," she added, lowering her voice as she glanced at Edgar, and observed a peculiar expression on his counte-

nance, "I will tell you all about it by and by, Carrie." Then, in her usual tone, she continued—"I must make haste and set down all my spendings before I forget them, which I shall assuredly do before to-morrow dawns. What confusion!" she exclaimed, as she approached the table; "it must, indeed, well occupy a person's time to keep this room in order. Come, little ones, cannot you give me a clear corner large enough for my desk?" and the children having moved to make more space for her, she placed her desk on the table, took from it a large account-book, and was soon setting down a long row of figures, talking away as she proceeded, though no one seemed to listen to her but Carrie; Edgar and Lionel being now engrossed in their game, and the little ones intent on their own occupation.

"I had a piece of good luck to day," she said, as she made a pile of shillings, sixpences, and other small coins; "while I

was at Turner's, grandmamma drove up, and when I told her what I was about, she gave me her purse, saying she feared its contents were not much worth having, but whatever they might be, I was welcome to them. I immediately dived into each compartment of her *portemonnaie*, and collected altogether a half-sovereign, four shillings, five sixpences, and two fourpenny pieces; a most abundant production, I thought, and most grateful I felt for it, for my funds, after the outlay of to-day, would have been at rather a low ebb. All my loose silver I shall return into my purse for present purposes; but this bright bit of gold I mean to keep, if possible, as a kind of nest-egg to resort to for some special purpose."

And she was on the point of slipping the half-sovereign into a partition of her desk, when her little brothers, attracted by the pretty glittering coin, took it up, and she suffered them to divert themselves by spin-

ning it, hiding it, and holding it grasped tightly in their palms, for the others to guess which hand contained the treasure, while she proceeded with her accounts, and the children, well pleased with their new plaything, did not relinquish it till summoned to the nursery-tea, when Lottie hastily put it away, as she had intended, in a small compartment of her desk; and, having by this time finished her business, she left the table, and seated herself by Lionel's side to watch his game, and shortly after the young party dispersed to dress for dinner, Lottie all impatience to be alone with Carrie, to give her an account of her day's achievements.

CHAPTER II.

FROM her earliest childhood Lottie Aylmer had been accustomed to accompany her mamma on her visits to the poor; her greatest treat was to be the bearer of some little gift to a needy or suffering cottager; in the generosity and ardor of her young heart, willingly would she bestow every little coin her purse contained to any one who craved her charity and help, and Lady Aylmer, pleased at the benevolent disposition of her little girl, encouraged her in all her benevolent schemes, and thus having no checks or difficulties in pursuing her course of charity, and with the agreeable sensation of doing good, it became by degrees not only Lottie's principal occupation, but her chief resource to attend to the poor—an

amusement, in short, into which she entered with the same kind of zest with which Carrie worked in her garden, or Lionel set traps for hedgehogs.

And Lottie, as she grew older, became somewhat perverse and self-sufficient in her charitable plans; her mother's advice was no longer strictly adhered to, at times not even asked; while the governesses complained that their pupil's mind was so engrossed by her projects for reforming and improving others, that she gave no thought to her own education; her brothers murmured that in their holidays she would be constantly running after "old women," and could spare no time to them, and even the gentle Carrie once, when recovering from a long illness, was found quietly weeping because her sister came not to cheer her in her hours of languor and depression. Lady Aylmer perceived the error she had committed in the training of her child, in

allowing her to pursue even the laudable grace of charity without guidance and restraint; she deplored it, but she had herself learnt a useful lesson, and, as far as Lottie was concerned, she trusted that with much natural good sense, and profiting by the experience of the scrapes and troubles into which her imprudence and self-reliance were continually plunging her, she would in time learn the meaning of "true charity."

On the day on which our story commences, she had accomplished an object on which her mind had been bent. There had come to the village a widow and two young daughters; the mother represented herself to be a native of Stanley village, who when quite young married a Scotchman, with whom chance had brought her acquainted, and had ever since lived in Scotland. Her husband being now dead, she had returned to her own parish, where, however, her relations having all died, she

was as a stranger in the place which she had once called home—remembered and cared for by few, and, indeed, it seemed to her as much a matter of choice as of necessity to live apart from the rest of the world, with her two children, the elder a cripple of seventeen, the younger a bright-eyed healthy girl of fifteen. Of course, Lottie soon made acquaintance with these new residents, and she became quite enthusiastically interested in the trio—the mother, so melancholy looking, the cripple, with her suffering expression, and the pretty Jeanie. In spite of all her endeavors, Lottie could glean but little of their history from either the mother or daughters—the widow, indeed, seemed to shrink from all inquiries into the past, and there was a kind of dignified reserve in her manner which could not fail to check any intrusion into her private affairs.

She appeared, notwithstanding, duly grateful for the many kindnesses bestowed on her

by Lady Aylmer, and gradually learnt to hail Lottie's visits with pleasure, and to confide in her her present difficulties and wants, though as silent as ever on the subject of bygone days.

Once she mentioned her wish to obtain a situation for Jeanie; she thought it would be better, she said, for her to go out and learn to be a good servant; then, if any thing happened to herself, one of her children would be provided for. Lottie said little in reply to Mrs. Gordon, but immediately a scheme entered her busy brain, which she was determined to accomplish, and with all speed she flew home, and, breathless with running and eagerness, rushed into the drawing-room and cried out:

"Oh, mamma, please let Jeanie Gordon be the girl to assist in the school-room this Christmas!"

It was Lady Aylmer's custom to have some additional assistant for the school-room maid

during the holidays; when the boys were at home, there was so much more work, so many to wait on, so much tidying of the school-room, so many things to put back in their places; she generally selected one of the oldest and most deserving of her Sunday scholars to fill this post, which was considered by them the greatest honor and advantage; for, after serving for a couple of months at the Court, under the instructions of superior servants, with a neat wardrobe in hand, the fruits of their earnings, and a good character from "my lady," they never failed to obtain some other eligible and more permanent situation.

Lady Aylmer had, on this occasion, not yet fixed on a girl to fill the temporary office, and when Lottie thus unexpectedly came to her with her urgent request, she begged at least she might have time to consider the matter before she made any promise.

But Lottie was quite impatient.

"Mamma, why should you hesitate a moment? I thought you were as interested in the Gordons as I am; only yesterday I heard you say what a nice bright-looking girl Jeanie was. Surely, mamma, you do not heed those gossipping old women who declare there must be something wrong about Mrs. Gordon, just because she does not delight in giving long wearisome accounts of her troubles, as they themselves do?"

"My dear Lottie," replied her mother, "pray do not excite yourself so unnecessarily; all I desire is time to judge as to the expediency of such a step; believe me, it is for Jeanie's sake!"

"Oh, mamma, can you doubt the great advantage it would be to her? Why, being here was the making of Ann Jones, and all the other school-girls; she could learn so much, and then with a good character from you—"

"Ah, Lottie, that is the very point. The

girls I have chosen from time to time from my school, I have known from their infancy; the case is quite different with regard to Jeanie."

"But, mamma, I am sure she must be deserving—honesty and truth are written on her countenance; and poor Hester, how patiently she bears her affliction! and Mrs. Gordon—oh, I am convinced they are all real objects for kindness and assistance!"

"Very likely, my dear; indeed, I am quite inclined to agree with all you say in their favor, still I wish I could know more of their former history, that I might judge better whether it would be right and advisable to place Jeanie in a situation like ours. As it is, being perfectly ignorant of her past life and conduct, I rather doubt the prudence of such a step."

"Then, mamma, must she always continue to lead an unprofitable life, and be a burden to her mother?"

"Pray allow me to finish what I was saying, Lottie. I was going to observe that, in a large house like this, there are inevitably greater temptations, and more facility for doing wrong, than in a more limited sphere. For instance, as regards one point alone, how easy for a girl not strictly honest to commit little acts of petty pilfering, which, beginning with the smallest and most valueless things, may, in time, increase to larger thefts, till discovery and ruin are the consequences! How careless you are!—not you alone, Lottie, but all of you, Carrie and the boys, in leaving your things about in the school-room; perhaps a brooch, or stud, or ring, lying apparently uncared for, for days together, on the mantel-piece; or a heap, maybe of half-pence, sometimes stray sixpences, loose in your work-baskets; and then that incorrigible habit of forgetting to lock your desks, or leaving the bunch of keys hanging from them, almost tempting any one

to open them and examine their contents. Few think of the evil they are doing when thus, as it were, they thrust temptation before the young and weak; it is a common failing, little thought of now, but one for which I doubt not we must hereafter give as strict an account as for sins which are regarded by the world as of far greater magnitude."

Lady Aylmer spoke very gravely, and Lottie, impressed by her words, forbore to interrupt her.

"My opinion is," continued she, "that, considering all circumstances, it might be better for Jeanie to commence her career as a servant in some house where the vigilant eye of a mistress might be constantly upon her; by this means her character might be thoroughy tested and established, and then, assured of her worth and capabilities, she might with full confidence be recommended to some more advantageous situation. Now,

I hear Mrs. Dawson is in want of a maid; you know what a capital person she is for making a good servant of any quick and tractable girl; that would, I really think, be just the place for Jeanie."

"Oh, mamma!" but think of that pretty, ladylike-looking Jeanie spending all her days with her gown and sleeves tucked up, on her knees scrubbing the brick floors in a farm-house, with that vulgar Mrs. Dawson continually scolding her with her loud, rough voice. Oh, I had pictured it all so differently,—Jeanie, in a neat dress and snowy white apron, and the jauntiest of little caps at the back of her head, waiting on us in the school-room. Oh, mamma, I am so disappointed; I cannot bear your plan."

And Lottie became so tearful and excited that her mother begged her to dismiss the subject for the present, promising once more to think it well over, and to give her a decided answer the following day.

Lady Alymer did duly weigh the matter in her mind, and as she thought upon it, the case became more difficult for her to decide on satisfactorily to herself than she could have at first imagined. While, on one side, the arguments she had used with Lottie remained as forcible as ever, on the other there arose the impression, with which her own ideas as well as Lottie's were filled, of the Gordons being different, superior to the commonalty of villagers; the reserve which was so tenaciously adhered to by Mrs. Gordon rendering it, at the same time, impossible to discover the history of her married life; still, without some kind of reference for the character of Jeanie, could she conscientiously take her into her house amongst so large an establishment of servants—would it be acting fairly and rightly towards herself, her servants, and towards the girl? But she felt very anxious to befriend Jeanie, as well as to please her daugh-

ter; therefore, perhaps against her better judgment, when Lottie came to her for her answer, and redoubled her persuasions, she consented that she should go to Mrs. Gordon, and mention the subject to her, Lady Aylmer hoping, and fully believing, that Mrs. Gordon would at once see the propriety of referring her to some source for her character, or would decline the situation for Jeanie if unable to do so. Lottie, overjoyed at having won over her mother, and scarcely heeding the terms of her permission, lost no time in repairing to the cottage, pleasing herself as she went along by picturing the surprise and happiness her announcement would call forth. Great, therefore, was her astonishment and mortification at the manner in which her communication was received. Instead of joy, a shadow of the deepest pain passed over Mrs. Gordon's countenance; the color came into her usually pallid cheeks, and, after a pause, she

stammered forth thanks to Lady Aylmer, but said she feared it could not be—indeed, she had that very morning engaged for Jeanie to go to Mrs. Dawson at the Moor Farm.

"But, surely," exclaimed Lottie, "that need not signify; Mrs. Dawson would give her up if she knew of mamma's offer; she could not be so selfish and unkind as to stand in the way of her getting such a far better situation."

"Well, miss, she does seem a warm-hearted woman," returned Mrs. Gordon; "still, I have promised her, and I should not think it right to fall back from my word."

"Oh!" returned Lottie, "leave me to settle it with her. I will go to the Moor Farm and speak to her about it. Come, Hester," she continued, turning to the lame girl, who sat rapidly plying her knitting-needles, but listening eagerly to the conversation, "what say you, would you not rather

have Jeanie at the Court than with Mrs. Dawson?"

"Why, for the matter of that, miss," replied Hetty, in her Scotch dialect, and with her decided manner of expressing herself, "I canna but say it would be a far grander place for her, and I am sure she would feel proud to serve sic bonny leddies; but the fine ways of the Court might not suit a humble lass like our Jeanie, and maybe it is best to begin at the foot of the ladder."

Certainly Lottie received no encouragement in her plan, for when Jeanie herself entered, and was told of it, she only curtseyed low, and said, "As mother pleases." But so bent was Lottie on the fulfilment of her new scheme, that the more discouragement she met with, the more pertinaciously she persevered to gain her point; and, forgetful of all her mother had said and desired on the subject, she continued to urge the matter, till at length Mrs. Gordon seemed

no longer able to resist the force of her persuasions; her determination wavered, and she retired for a few moments, and spoke in a low tone to her daughter Hester, who, in her answers, appeared to be giving her opinion on some important point; then Mrs. Gordon returned to the fireplace near which Lottie was seated, and with an agitated, careworn countenance, and speaking with a great effort, she said:

"Miss Aylmer, you must be aware no servant is admitted into the Court without her character being first obtained. There is no one in these parts to speak for Jeanie."

"No, not here," replied Lottie; "but in Scotland—in your old neighborhood—"

She stopped abruptly on perceiving the expression of pain on Mrs. Gordon's face, and there was a blank pause for a moment or two; then Mrs. Gordon continued: "Yes, I know no one would speak ill of my Jeanie; but"—she hesitated again—"Mrs. Dawson

is willing to trust us. Her house is a different one to yours, miss; and altogether, as it is settled, so, perhaps, it had best remain. Hetty thinks so too."

"Yes," said Hetty, decidedly, almost sharply, "it is always best to leave well alone."

She spoke the very same words that Edgar so constantly used. What a pity Lottie was not struck by them, and the expressive tone in which they were pronounced! But no, the spirit of self-will was too strong within her; bent on one purpose, opposition only rendered her the more resolute, and she did not leave the cottage until, by dint of persuasion and arguments, which Mrs. Gordon found it impossible to combat, she had gained her point, and it was settled that on Christmas-eve Jeanie should be installed at the Court; and then she set forth to walk, in the fast waning light of a December afternoon, to the Moor Farm, to make the matter all right with Mrs. Dawson.

Perhaps, in the solitude of her walk, Lottie might have reflected with some compunction on the manner in which she had fulfilled the mission intrusted to her, and the excitement of the moment over, have even felt somewhat startled at having so far outstepped the limits of discretionary power confided to her; but it was not till she stood face to face with Mrs. Dawson, that she was awakened to a full sense of her abuse of her mother's confidence, and from her heart wished indeed she had "left well alone." Little prepared was she for the storm which burst forth when she made known the new arrangement which had been formed for Jeanie. Mrs. Dawson had been all that day priding herself on having performed a most benevolent action, in consenting to take into her well-ordered house a girl on whom her neighbors looked doubtingly, because they could glean no particulars of the history of her family. She had been struck

by the extreme neatness of the widow's cottage, and in her eyes decidedly cleanliness stood next to godliness; moreover, Mrs. Dawson's heart was warm, though her manner was rough and harsh, her tongue loud, and at times abusive; altogether she was not unwilling to incur the risk of receiving Jeanie into the Moor Farm, but now to lose the self-satisfaction of a good deed and a useful servant together, and to think that the girl was otherwise so eligibly provided for without her consent, and without consulting her convenience, it was more than could be borne with patience, so she poured forth a storm of invectives, insinuating such evil things of the Gordons which she had "heard say of them," that poor Lottie quite quailed beneath her terrible words; then after a time her passion cooling down, and remembering she had been wanting in due respect to Miss Aylmer, and wishing to make amends, like most violent people, Mrs

Dawson endeavored to do away the effect of what she had said, to contradict her former assertions, and ended by expressing a hope that Jeanie would do very well in the comfortable situation chosen for her.

Lottie left the farm, feeling that her day's work had brought upon her at least a heavy responsibility for the future, but her elastic spirits rebounding with her walk through the bracing air, as we have seen, she joined her brothers and sisters in the school-room as cheerful and sanguine as ever.

When Carrie heard the account Lottie gave of her proceedings, she frankly expressed her surprise at the matter having been brought to a conclusion without her mother being further consulted as to her wishes; and Lottie, fully convinced that she had acted too precipitately, at once repaired to Lady Aylmer's dressing-room, and told her what she had arranged, at the same time shrinking from entering too minutely

into particulars. Lady Aylmer was annoyed, as might be expected, and blamed herself for not having given her orders more firmly; but the deed being done, with her usual indulgence, she forbore reproaches, and hoped the affair might turn out well.

Lottie felt some dread of the cutting speeches and satirical remarks Edgar would make on this her fresh "philanthropic frolic," as he was wont to term her various schemes, and fain would have kept him in ignorance of it; but with his keen penetration and inquisitive mind, he contrived to ferret out as much concerning the matter as suited his purpose; and the next morning, he said to the party assembled in the schoolroom, in a mournful and offended tone—"We must keep a sharp look-out now, else I suspect our property in this room will be soon taking unto itself wings, and flying away."

"What do you mean?" inquired Carrie.

"Why, with such a mysterious personage as the interesting Miss Jeanie Gordon continually flitting about in these our territories, I own I shall consider it necessary to be less careless than usual as to leaving my studs and other valuables about."

"Oh, Edgar," interrupted Arthur, one of the little boys who had been so intent on the quicksilver experiments the evening before, "are you afraid of your studs being changed, like my buttons were last night? This morning, when I saw my frock, I thought nurse had been putting on new, white, shining silver buttons."

"I am not afraid of my studs or rings being *changed*, Arthur," answered Edgar, looking in a marked manner at Lottie; "but of their disappearing altogether." Then, no notice being taken of his innuendoes, he proceeded—"I am desirous to know why my mother has been persuaded to select this Jeanie Gordon, instead of one of her own

school-girls? Is it because she is more refined, more interesting? I think it a most unfair act towards Martha and the other maids. Depend upon it the affair will be a failure. I really pity the silly person who has had a hand in the matter, whoever it may be."

With such like taunts and insinuations, he amused himself, and tormented Lottie at every convenient opportunity for the next few days. On Christmas-eve, Jeanie was duly installed in her situation at Stanley Court; and, instead of the pleasurable sensations Lottie had anticipated in seeing Jeanie going about the school-room doing her work so handily, a favorite with every one, she had not only to endure the sarcasms and side glances, half in mischief half in fun, which Edgar cast on her *protegé*, whenever she was guilty of any little awkward ness, thereby adding considerably to poor Jeanie's natural timidity; but it was evi-

dent that the servants of the Court felt somewhat aggrieved and offended that Jeanie, an unknown, untried character, one who had been considered to "hold herself rather high" in the village, should have been chosen in preference to one of "my lady's" school-girls—Ellen Brown, the niece of Martha, the head housemaid, for instance—and, in consequence, looked, to say the least, shyly upon Jeanie, and gave themselves not the trouble of instructing her in her several duties, as they would have done had another girl been in her place. Therefore, for some time, Jeanie was a kind of dead weight on the hands of her young patroness; Lottie not even having the consolation of seeing her look well and happy, but pale and anxious, overwhelmed with all she had to do and remember. But by degrees matters improved. Jeanie, naturally quick, profited by the immense pains Lottie felt it her duty to bestow on her, and be-

came so active and useful, and always looked so nice and neat, that Edgar, instead of launching forth his provoking insinuations, condescended to employ her in various little acts of service for him; while the servants, disarmed by her steady behavior, and won over by her obliging willingness, had not a word to say against her; and again Lottie glorified herself and her own handiwork.

CHAPTER III.

THE holidays were almost over; only a few days more, and the happy home-party would separate. For the last week, the brothers and sisters had been consulting together concerning a present, in which they were to join, to give Edgar on his birthday, which would take place on the day before his departure for Eton. As soon as the young party left the dining-room, they hurried to the library, to inspect the gift, which had arrived from the neighboring town. After duly commending the selection, and admiring the handsomely-bound volumes, they proceeded to settle the business part of the transaction, each producing his or her contribution towards

the purchase, and Lottie ran up stairs to fetch the half-sovereign which she had left in the partition of her desk since the day she had received it.

When she entered the school-room she was struck by the orderly state of the apartment, so different to what it had been a few hours before, when, on the dressing-bell ringing, she, and her brothers and sisters, had hurried away without thinking of the books, paints, and drawings they were leaving in such disorder on the table.

And this was all Jeanie's doing! and it was she who had made her what she was! But while Lottie thus exulted, did it strike her to inquire of her heart if *she* had equally profited by her mother's counsels and admonitions, or whether, while teaching another, she had not forgotten to practise what she preached. Perhaps her conscience might have felt a twinge, when, on approaching her desk, she found it unlocked,

with the key in it, and the recollection of resolutions broken, promises unfulfilled, have drawn forth a sigh of regret; but it was but a passing sentiment, forgotten almost as soon as felt.

She opened the desk, pressed with her finger the lid of the front compartment. It sprung up!

Was Lottie hurt, that she started back with a kind of shudder, and almost dropped the candle she held? What could it be that blanched her cheeks so suddenly, and spread such a look of dismay over her countenance? Was the partition empty? No, not quite that; but just in the very spot where she had placed the half-sovereign there lay, instead of the golden coin, a silver sixpence.

For a moment she was petrified, as it were, by amazement and dismay, rooted to the ground on which she stood—her eyes, with a wild stare, fixed on the desk; then, by degrees, as a flood of thoughts and memories

THE DISCOVERY.

rushed upon her senses, overpowered by their force, she sunk down crushed by her agonizing feelings. Like lightning the truth flashed upon her, and her hasty, impetuous nature, ever in extremes, would not allow her to trust and hope, even for an instant, that the case could be different to what she supposed it—Jeanie was *a thief!* Lottie was found by Carrie with her head buried in her hands, her whole frame writhing with agitation, and all the answer she could for some time make to her sister's anxious, alarmed inquiries, was to point to the desk with a look of despair; then, at length, she faltered forth her wretched discovery, all the time inveighing bitterly against herself for what had happened. It was in vain Carrie endeavored to soothe and encourage her to believe that the mysterious affair might be satisfactorily cleared up; she refused to be comforted, but yielded at last to her sister's persuasions to take no

steps in the matter till she had regained some degree of composure; and, totally unfit to go down stairs, she was fain to carry her throbbing head and aching heart to the solitude of her own chamber, while Carrie returned to the party in the drawing-room, and, on the plea of a headache, accounted for Lottie's non-appearance.

What a night Lottie spent! At times, exhausted by mental suffering, she would fall asleep, but her slumber was scared by dreams which made her start up with a vague sense of terror and oppression; but the chief part of the time she lay in that state which is neither sleeping nor waking, which has all the evil of both, and none of the good of either. She dreaded, yet at the same time wished for the morning, and long before light dawned she and Carrie were discussing the painful subject; Lottie, by degrees, gaining from the earnest, sensible words of her younger sister, some feeling

of strength for the trial she must encounter that day, though at times, when she thought of all the misery which was to fall on others, all owing to her crooked ways, she felt that her punishment was greater than she could bear. She cast no blame or angry invectives on Jeanie, but neither would she allow Carrie to tempt her to believe that by any other means the strange transfer could have been effected. She would not allow any suspicions to be directed towards the other long-tried servants, and she felt quite positive that, until that fatal evening, she had never once, since her mother's injunctions, left her desk unlocked. For Jeanie's sake she had been most careful in that matter. No one but Jeanie had been in the schoolroom since they left it to dress for dinner. No ; the fact was too plainly evident. Would that she had taken her mother's advice! But it was too late now to retrieve her false step. All that remained to her was

to endeavor to soften, as far as possible, the heavy blow which was to fall on poor Mrs. Gordon's head, and to render as little public as could be helped the disgrace of her *victim*, as she now called Jeanie. So she strove to calm her own anguish, that she might dispassionately consult with Carrie as to what had best be done; and it was soon determined by the sisters that the proper course to pursue was at once to make their mother acquainted with the affair; therefore, when Lottie, pale and sad, descended to the dining-room, and Lady Aylmer affectionately inquired if her headache were quite gone, she pressed her lips on her mother's forehead, and, in low tones, begged that, after breakfast, she might go to her in her sitting-room.

It is needless to relate with what sorrow Lady Aylmer listened to her daughter's recital. It shocked her to think that such a

studied act of duplicity, as well as dishonesty, should have been committed by any person, still more by one so young; indeed, she could scarcely believe it, and again and again implored Lottie to think well and try to recall to her recollection whether she had not at any time herself taken out the half-sovereign, and accidentally or inadvertently replaced it with a sixpence. Fain would poor Lottie have had it so, but it could not be; not to save Jeanie would she be guilty of an untruth, and there, upon the boudoir table, was the desk, with the shabby little sixpence lying in it, just as Lottie had found it. It was a most painful position for Lady Aylmer. Her mind revolted from casting an accusation on any one, if there were the slightest chance of accusing wrongfully; and in this case, unless Jeanie confessed her fault, how could they feel certain of her guilt? while a denial, on the other hand, would not be held

sufficient proof of her innocence. None but the eye of God had seen the unrighteous deed committed; and must Jeanie be ruined for life by an act which she could never have committed had she not been most injudiciously, without any knowledge of her strength of purpose to resist temptation, been brought into a situation of peril to a girl weak in principle? But Lady Aylmer also felt that she had a duty to perform as mistress of a large establishment; justice towards others required that she should have the moral courage to sift the matter thoroughly. It must have caused an additional pang to Lottie to see the pain she had given her mother, and, with beating heart and colorless cheeks, she obeyed Lady Aylmer's order to summon Jeanie to her presence.

Gently Lady Aylmer performed her painful task. Seeking in no degree to diminish the sense of the greatness of the crime, she

still forcibly impressed the promise that for every sinner there is pardon in heaven, if he earnestly and truly repent, and determine, by God's grace, to turn from the error of his ways; then, reminding Jeanie that the first sign of penitence should be an acknowledgment of the fault committed, she exhorted her to tell the whole truth, assuring her that if she trusted it to herself and Lottie, no one else should be made acquainted with what had occurred.

Then Lady Aylmer paused, and nervously awaited an answer. There was a dead silence for a moment or two, and then Jeanie lifted up her head, which had been bent down, and, with a face like marble, quivering lips, and in faltering accents, denied all knowledge of the half-sovereign; and when Lady Aylmer continued to urge her to confess the delinquency, and Lottie, with tears, entreated the same, in humble, respectful, but dignified and slightly aggrieved tones, she ex-

claimed: "My lady, I have spoken the truth, and you do not believe me; what more can I say?"

Lady Aylmer was therefore compelled to dismiss Jeanie from the very unsatisfactory interview, with the conviction that nothing remained for her but to speak to the girl's mother; and thinking it best not to delay the disagreeable matter, set off at once on her painful errand.

But when she entered the village, and approached the widow's cottage, she felt so agitated at the idea of what she had undertaken, that, to delay the meeting with Mrs. Gordon, she went into the draper's shop, on the plea of making some trifling purchase.

Mrs. Turner, with pleased alacrity, came forward to serve her as usual, most profuse in her inquiries after her ladyship's health, etc., then proceeded to impart sundry village news and gossip. At last she said: "What a kindness it has been in your ladyship to

take Jeanie Gordon into the Court! It will be quite the making of her for life. I hear she is becoming quite a handy servant, and she looks quite a different creature. Indeed, I hardly knew her when she came in yesterday evening. To be sure, it was late—past seven, I think. She looked so plump, and more cheerful like, and it seemed such a pleasure to her, poor thing, to have money of her own to spend; and a pretty good sum she laid out, too—her first wages, I presume."

In a manner which vainly she strove to render unconcerned, Lady Aylmer inquired: "And can you at all recollect, Mrs. Turner, how much she did lay out?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Turner, "just half a sovereign, my lady; and she sensibly asked my advice as to how to spend it best in buying comforts for her mother and sister."

Mrs. Turner was interrupted by other customers entering the shop; but Lady Aylmer

had heard enough—too much, alas! no further doubt remained on her mind of Jeanie's guilt. Her heart ached to think of such guile and depravity in one of whom she had once judged so favorably; but the case was now clear, she need have no compunctious hesitation in proceeding in the matter; so, summoning up all her courage, she entered Mrs. Gordon's dwelling.

We will not dwell on the scene that followed, or attempt to describe the overpowering grief of the widow as she listened to Lady Aylmer's tale; it is enough to say that, bowed down with misery, she appeared meekly and humbly to accept this new trial as another heavy burden, to be submissively borne in this her weary pilgrimage through life. Not so her daughter Hester; with flashing eyes and flushed cheeks, she heard the accusation against her sister, then rose from her seat, and, leaning on her crutch, burst forth into a stream of angry indigna-

tion and complaint. Was it for this that Miss Aylmer had forced Jeanie into going to the Court? Why could she not have left them in peace? She had never wished her sister to take the situation. Had she not begged her to leave well alone? And Jeanie, who was as true as gold, was she to be called a thief?

It was the sight of Hetty's impetuous, wrathful grief that roused Mrs. Gordon. In gentle tones she besought her daughter to endeavor to be calm, reminding her that she was wanting in respect to Lady Aylmer; then, with a powerful effort over her feelings, she said: "I have been very wrong, my lady; I should not have allowed Miss Aylmer to engage my child without referring her to some one for her character. I did mention it, but I own I did not press the matter enough, for there are reasons"—here the widow's utterance was choked by emotion—"painful reasons, which made me

loth to apply to one whom I both love and reverence. But there is no help for it now; all I can do is to entreat you not to judge too harshly of my Jeanie until you have written to and heard from this lady," and she gave Lady Aylmer a slip of paper, on which was the address of "Lady M'Kenzie, —— Castle, N. B." Lady Aylmer, too happy to accede to a request which would be the means of affording her what she had so much desired, some information concerning Mrs. Gordon and her family, promised to write to Lady M'Kenzie that day; and though the circumstances of the case forbade her indulging in any sanguine hope that Jeanie might be proved innocent—for neither Mrs. Gordon nor Hester could account for her having money of her own to spend—she left the cottage fully persuaded that at least the widow was no abettor or conniver in the fraudulent scheme, but greatly to be compassionated. Most willing

was she, at all events, to defer the direct condemnation of Jeanie; and when Hester, unable to restrain her overwrought, indignant feelings, quitted the room, Lady Aylmer assured Mrs. Gordon that the distressing affair should not be mentioned to any one, not even to Mrs. Thompson, the housekeeper, so that her daughter might be spared from pain and discomfort during the two days which remained of her engagement at the Court.

Lottie, who was anxiously and nervously awaiting her mother's return, with her usual sanguineness, at once flung off her load of deep despondency, and the brightest hopefulness took its place. Lady M'Kenzie's letter, she felt sure, would be all that could be desired; and so interested and excited was she by the idea of receiving from her ladyship the long wished-for history of Jeanie's former life, that for a time the catastrophe which had so distressed her a few

hours before, seemed almost forgotten. She lingered near her mother's writing-table, considerably interrupting, by her remarks and suggestions, Lady Aylmer's progress in composing a letter, which, from being addressed to a perfect stranger, on a subject of some delicacy, required more than ordinary care and discrimination. Lady Aylmer did not consider herself authorized to enter into details herself, or to seek them from another, but merely informed Lady M'Kenzie that she had become interested in a widow and her daughters of the name of Gordon, and that as it would be a satisfaction to her to obtain some testimonials of their former characters, at the request of Mrs. Gordon, she had taken the liberty of applying to her ladyship for that purpose. Lottie herself dropped the important missive into the Court letter-box, lamenting, as she did so, that not until the fourth day could an answer be received.

When lying sleepless on her bed the night before, distracted with grief and remorse, the idea of what Edgar would say had added an additional pang to Lottie's heart. She was quite rejoiced that he was absent at breakfast-time, having set out at day-break for his last day's hunting; he did not come home till so late, that there was scarcely time to receive his birthday presents and congratulations, before a party of friends arrived to spend the evening, whom poor Lottie had to entertain, with what cheerfulness she could, and who went away wondering what was the matter with Charlotte Aylmer. Perhaps she was out of spirits at her brother's leaving home. The next morning the note of preparation sounded at an early hour, and the boys set forth to their various destinations; in the afternoon Jeanie left the Court for her mother's cottage, and Miss Page returned to resume the reins of government in the school-room.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY M'KENZIE'S letter came, but did it fulfil Lottie's expectations? It was courteously, feelingly worded, but short and formal as a letter from one stranger to another must ever be. She informed Lady Aylmer she had known Mrs. Gordon for many years, James Gordon, her husband, having been long employed on Sir Alexander's estate. She was happy to be able to speak in favorable terms of Mrs. Gordon, who had ever borne the character of an industrious woman and an excellent wife and mother. She had felt much interested in her and her daughters, and had not been aware, until the receipt of Lady Aylmer's letter, that Mrs. Gordon had become a widow. She was very sorry to have to add

that James Gordon had, about a year ago, been dismissed by Sir Alexander's steward on a charge of dishonest practices, after which the little family left the village, giving no clue to their future destination. In conclusion, Lady M'Kenzie expressed her readiness to befriend Mrs. Gordon, should Lady Aylmer be able to point out to her the means of so doing; she feared she and her children must be in needy circumstances.

No; Lottie felt quite unsatisfied; she had fully expected some particular mention of Jeanie, and, ever so hasty in deciding, was now disposed, in the revulsion of her feelings, to put the most gloomy, disheartening construction upon Lady M'Kenzie's silence on this point, forgetting that since Lady Aylmer had made no especial inquiries concerning Jeanie, Lady M'Kenzie was not in any way called upon to give a separate report of her.

Lady Aylmer felt it incumbent on her to

apprise Mrs. Gordon of Lady M'Kenzie's communication to her. She read aloud the note and its contents, and the regretful tone of Lady Aylmer's voice produced an agitating effect on the widow, while Hester's kindling cheeks bespoke her angry feelings, and Jeanie's head was sorrowfully bent down.

From that time Lady Aylmer relaxed not in acts of consideration and benevolence towards the little family, but forbore going herself, as formerly, to the cottage; and, notwithstanding the strict silence she and her children preserved concerning the painful occurrence, vague rumors, of something being amiss, got abroad, eagerly seized upon and enlarged by the gossips of the village, in consequence of which the widow and her daughter Hester, who had begun to make a tolerable footing, as needlewomen, in the place, found their hard-gained employment falling away, and themselves regarded even

more coldly and suspiciously than before by their neighbors.

Lottie became aware of this, and it roused her to do what she so much shrunk from; if all other friends forsook them, she, the unhappy cause of their wretchedness, must stand by them in the hour of disgrace and desertion. Hitherto she had scrupulously avoided falling in with any of the family, but now she would meet them face to face. It was hard to have to go to them without one word of hope or consolation, but it was an act of duty and kindness already too long delayed, so she must nerve herself for the trial. But it was with slow and lingering steps she went on her way, pausing ever and anon to gather fresh courage, and to ponder on what she could say for the best; and when she reached the garden-gate, her voice and breath seemed to have left her, and she was obliged to stand there till, with a strong effort over herself, she partly re-

covered, and her heart began to beat less violently; then she proceeded towards the cottage, which was one in a row of humble dwellings, each having a long narrow strip of ground in front, and had advanced half way up the path, when she saw Hester Gordon move quickly towards the open door, and hastily shut it. Poor Lottie! the fact was evident to her; she was spurned and insulted by those for whom she had done and suffered so much. Filled with indignation and humiliation, her head giddy from the shock she had received, she immediately retraced her steps, and left the garden far more rapidly than she had entered it. This was the crowning point of her misery. She told no one of what had happened; closely she kept her secret locked up within her own bosom, but she brooded over it till the color vanished from her cheeks, the light fled from her eyes, and such a dark shadow seemed to have fallen upon her, that the

once light-hearted Lottie, with her bounding steps and beaming countenance, was no longer to be recognized in the languid, melancholy-looking girl.

The Easter holidays brought home her brother Edgar, who was surprised at her pale looks, and quickly inquired into the cause, when alone with Carrie. She told him the whole story, begging that he would forbear to torment poor Lottie, who had already suffered so much. Only the sight of her spiritless appearance could have kept him silent. He was much shocked and very indignant, saying that he had particularly observed Jeanie, and thought it far more likely that Lottie, in her carelessness, had herself disposed of the half-sovereign, and forgotten it, than that Jeanie should have been to blame, so thoroughly good a girl as she evidently was.

"Ah!" said Carrie, "the worst of it is, that she really did lay out ten shillings at

Turner's on that very evening, when she could not have had her wages."

"What evening?"

"The night before your birthday."

"Ha, ha!" cried Edgar; "why, I gave her that myself?"

"You, Edgar?"

"Yes, I thought I owed her some compensation for the prejudice with which Lottie had inspired me at first. Besides, she had been very obliging in cleaning up the intolerable messes Lionel was always making with his chemistry, at which any sophisticated housemaid would have rebelled. So, in the flush of my allowance, I bestowed this unlucky half-sovereign, and thinking, maybe, that my generosity had been weak, never mentioned it. There, Miss Carrie, your circumstantial evidence breaks down. Depend on it, it will prove another whim of Lottie's."

Carrie joyously reported this discovery

to her mother, hoping that she would think it cleared Jeanie; but the stubborn fact still remained—the absence of the half-sovereign —and Lady Aylmer advised that nothing should be said to Lottie, since she was beginning to be brightened by the return of her brother; and it was a pity to renew the painful subject without effect.

It was on one of those bright, beautiful days, which often come in spring, as if to cheat us into the belief that blighting frosts and chilling winds have taken their final departure, and summer has come to reign supreme over the earth, that Edgar summoned Lottie for a walk across the fields, to call on the clergyman's family in the adjoining parish.

She was bending over her desk when she heard Edgar's voice, authoritatively ordering her to put on her bonnet and cloak without delay; and, remembering there was a shop in the village to which they were going, where

she might buy a bit of ribbon for her little sister's doll, she opened her purse to examine its contents. There was no smaller coin in it than a half-crown, and with that unaccountable impulse which comes over us at times, she opened the partition into which she had not had courage to look since that wretched day of her fatal discovery, where lay the despicable little sixpence, just as it had been found and left.

"Well," thought Lottie with a sigh, "it is no use leaving it there; I will take it and spend it, and rid myself of its hated sight forever; that I can, at least, do." And she put it as hastily as she could into a separate compartment of her purse, all alone, as if its very touch could change or contaminate the rest of her money.

The brother and sister had soon set forth on their walk, Lottie's step more buoyant, her cheeks less pale than they had been for many weeks, for it is impossible wholly to

resist the influence of external objects; and who could be sad with that clear blue sky above, and that brilliant burst of spring which seemed to change all the past gloom of winter into brightness? Their way led through fields already enamelled with daisies, and bordered by hedges, from whose fresh young foliage sprung many singing birds, rejoicing in the sudden warmth and sunshine. When Lottie and Edgar had crossed the first broad meadow, the latter perceived that his favorite terrier was not with them. Never thoroughly happy unless he had this little creature following at his heels, he was deliberating what steps to take, whether to go back for him or not, when a small village boy was seen approaching, and was instantly dispatched in quest of "Skye;" in the mean while, Edgar and Lottie seated themselves on a stile, enjoying the soft, balmy air, blowing so gently upon them. Soon the boy was beheld in the distance returning, with great

speed, Skye kicking and struggling in his arms.

"Well done, my little man!" cried Edgar approvingly, and he put his fingers into his waistcoat-pocket in search of the wherewithal to recompense the active messenger. But his purse was not there, and he had to ask Lottie to lend him the sum. She handed her purse to him, and he took from it the fatal sixpence, the only one the purse contained. He sat twirling it in his hand, as he watched the progress of his pet, which now, having caught sight of his master, had sprung out of the boy's arms, and was rushing towards him; but at last, happening to glance at the coin which was glittering in the sun's rays, something in its appearance struck him as rather peculiar. He held it up to the light, and, as he did so, not only the piece of money glittered, but his finger and thumb also shone, and the palm of his hand on which it had lain.

"Why, Lottie," he exclaimed jokingly, "what's the meaning of this? What base coin have you been trying to impose upon me? I verily believe your silver sixpence is worth no more than a brass farthing, which assuredly it is and nothing else. Who has been taking such a liberty as to electroplate her majesty's countenance? Look, the false coating is running about all over my fingers; but I will soon do away with it, and see what it will really turn out to be."

And he rubbed the sixpence with his handkerchief, Lottie imagining all the while he was in fun, and therefore, scarcely heeding what he was about, but, chancing to turn towards him, just as he had finished, she saw an expression on his face which made her start; the next moment he held up before her, in the dazzling sunshine, a bright, shining half-sovereign, and, spreading open his besmeared hand, gasped forth:

"Oh, Lottie, the quicksilver—the quicksilver!" And then the whole truth flashed upon Lottie's mind; and so great was her agitation, that she was obliged to lean for support against the stile.

But a very short time, however, was she allowed to give way to her feelings; for Edgar was rushing across the meadow towards home, and she was following him. She found it hard work to keep up at all with his rapid strides, and he paused not a moment in his impetuous energy; but, Lottie, too, was reckoned fleet of foot, and now she seemed scarcely to touch the ground as she bounded on, much to the amazement of the little village urchin, who was at a loss to conjecture whether or not this was all done for the benefit of Skye, who scampered after them, barking and springing up into the air as if delighted with the gambols.

CHAPTER V.

LADY Aylmer was startled, and somewhat alarmed, when Edgar and Lottie, who she had fancied to be well disposed of for the whole afternoon, rushed into the drawing-room, regardless of the velvet-piled carpet, with their thick muddy boots and their faces crimson, Skye, not a privileged visitor, accompanying them; and it was almost provoking, when each had dropped into a chair, and their mother was all anxiety to learn the cause of their unexpected return, that neither of them could answer her. Quite exhausted, and out of breath, Lottie sat gasping, in vain trying to articulate, while Edgar rocked himself to and fro,

and thumped his chest as though he were endeavoring to knock some breath into his lungs.

A strange silence reigned for a short time, broken at length by Lottie, who still further astonished Lady Aylmer, by running to her and throwing her arms around her neck, exclaiming, "Oh, mamma, mamma, the half-sovereign is found!" And then Edgar was able to continue the theme, and to relate in broken snatches the marvellous discovery of the dirty little coin they had supposed a shabby sixpence turning out to be a golden piece, disguised by a superficial coating of quicksilver. Gaining breath, he explained how it must have happened, reminded Lottie and his mother of the experiments Lionel used to perform for the amusement of the younger children in the holidays—that of the silver-tree, for instance—and how, on that particular evening, Lottie had given her half-sovereign to the little ones to play with

while she cast up her accounts. He recollected the quicksilver being spilt on the school-room table, and the children spinning the coin close to the spot where the fluid lay in a pool. He mentioned the hands of the little boy who had unlaced his boots being incrusted with the quicksilver in which he had been dabbling; and recalled to Lottie's remembrance little Arthur's remark, the next morning, about his gilt buttons having been changed into silver ones in the night. And now he perfectly recollected, on a former occasion, when he himself had assisted in some chemical experiments, in which nitrate of silver was used, being surprised at finding his *lapis lazuli* seal-ring suddenly set in silver instead of gold. Yes, the case was clear as noon-day, and Edgar and Lottie wondered they had not thought of the quicksilver before. They felt provoked with themselves for what now seemed to them an extraordinary instance of dullness on their

part. Thus it often is. In the egotism of our hearts we attribute to ourselves, to our own actions, all the circumstances and events of our lives, whether for good or evil, as if we held in our weak hands the ordering and disposing of each incident that befalls us; whereas the occurrences of every day, however apparently trivial, are carefully appointed for us by One who, in wisdom and love, withholds and gives in His own good time.

Lady Aylmer warmly sympathized in the joy of her children. Indeed, to her the discovery was fraught with the utmost satisfaction and thankfulness; for greatly had she deplored the mysterious affair for the sake of all concerned in it—not least for Lottie, into whose feelings of anxiety to acquaint as soon as possible the widow and her daughters with the strange reappearance of the half-sovereign she fully entered; but, considering the delicate health of the widow, and the in-

jurious effect any sudden agitation might have upon her, and thinking Lottie stood in need of a night's rest to calm down her excitement, the sudden revulsion from trouble to happiness seeming almost too much for her to bear, she delayed the interview with Mrs. Gordon and Jeanie until the following morning, though Edgar impetuously asserted it to be a downright act of cruelty to allow another night to pass over their heads without removing that dark shadow of suspicion which had so long rested on them.

Thankful must Lady Aylmer have felt that, in the painful part she had been compelled to take with respect to Jeanie, she had performed the task as gently and forbearingly as possible; that charity, which "hopeth, beareth all things," had been her guide and director. Nevertheless, her tenderly sensitive heart now revolted at the idea of having, even with such just grounds, accused any one wrongly. She did not con-

ceal these feelings of sad regret from her children; and, in the midst of Lottie's rejoicing, a fresh pang was inflicted on her heart at the remembrance of the distress she had caused to so many by her self-will and hasty judgments. The meeting with Mrs. Gordon and Jeanie could not fail to be an affecting scene to all concerned. Peace and comfort were, indeed, imparted to the widow by the intelligence Lady Aylmer communicated of the innocence of Jeanie being fully established, and the feelings of the mother were for a time overpowering. And Jeanie —her happiness was so thankful, so humble, while she endeavored through her tears to confess how she had really been to blame—not for taking half a sovereign which did not belong to her, that she never would have done—but, when the young gentleman gave her the money, for having rushed out, without leave, to spend it. Her unthinking act of breaking through a rule had been the

cause of all her trouble, and she had been too much frightened, too much shocked the the next day to speak out to "my lady," as she ought to have done, and tell the whole truth. She hoped through all her life to bear in mind what great harm might come from even a little falling off from duty.

A few days after this, Lottie heard that Hester Gordon was very ill. She went to her, and for many weeks, while the poor girl lay hovering between life and death, continued to visit her and administer to her wants. But it was in a different spirit from heretofore that Lottie performed this labor of love; no longer self-confident and leaning on her own understanding, but patient, and with humility yielding to the opinions of others. And when at length, one evening, the sick girl feebly stretched forth her thin hand, and, in accents no longer fretful and querulous, but beseeching and faltering, implored her pardon for her angry, ungrateful

conduct towards her, Lottie pressed it within her own, and bending down over Hester, told her that, as sincerely as she repented and mourned over her own errors and shortcomings, and trusted to be forgiven, so she from her heart forgave her.

THE WHITE VIOLET.

IT is so joyous in the glad spring-time, when the little children go forth in merry groups into the fields and woods and gather their laps full of daisies and wild-violets to twine in the curls of their fair hair! The birds seem so numerous then, for the foilage is not yet thick enough to hide them; and they fly from branch to branch, and swing on the slender twigs, calling to each other that the cold winter is past, and the summer will soon be here. Then the air is so soft and refreshing, because the hot summer sun has not yet dried the moisture from the ground, and baked the earth into a hard

clay; and the little rivulets gurgle over the stones so quickly, as though they feared old Winter was coming again to bind them fast in his icy chains. Yes, it is so very joyous in the early spring!

And so all things seemed rejoicing one lovely day in a spring-time long ago. There was sunshine and gladness everywhere, save on the brow and in the heart of little Fienna, for there alone were clouds and sorrow. She walked slowly out into the fresh fields and the shaded woods, with her eyes bent on the ground, heeding not the freshness and beauty that surrounded her; and at last, flinging herself upon the green turf, wept loudly and long. It was pitiful to see the little girl's grief, when all around was gay.

But Fienna often came out into the woods to weep, for indeed she was very unhappy. Her father and mother were dead, and she lived with a stern old woman who had one child of her own, and considered the little

orphan a great burden. Fienna was pretty and fair, with soft blue eyes and pale golden tresses, that curled without being tortured against their will, and hung in shining ringlets over her shoulders; but her cheeks were not rosy like those of happier children, and her eyelids were often red and swollen with tears, so that the neighbors' children called her a fright. The woman with whom Fienna lived had known the little girl's mother well, and received many kindnesses from her. She had promised her, when she was dying, to take care of the poor little motherless Fienna, and treat her as her own child. But though she took the little girl home, and bade her be happy, as she had got another mother, yet the child found a very great difference between the true and the adopted parent.

This woman had one only son, who was his mother's darling, and a spoiled, ill-natured boy besides. He delighted in teasing

Fienna, and playing all manner of tricks upon her, frequently causing her a scolding when she did not deserve it; and if any thing happened amiss, or he did any mischief, he always blamed the little girl, whose denials were never believed, and who consequently often bore the punishment which he deserved. Fienna hated Fritz with all her heart; and though she had ever been a good-tempered and pleasant child, she was fast becoming sulky and ill-humored by his constant oppression; and then his mother would say, "Why, Fienna, I once thought you a good child; but you have grown so very wicked, I must punish you again."

And then the little girl had another task given her, and was forced to stay within, while all the other children went out to the woods; and Fritz flung pebbles in upon her from the open window.

No wonder Fienna threw herself upon the

bank and cried when she thought of all these things. Fritz had been unusually wicked that day, and had cut off one of her long curls in his ill-mannered, teasing moods. So when the little girl received permission at last to go out into the woods, she sought a lonely spot, and there gave full vent to her anger and tears.

"Oh, how I hate that Fritz!" she cried; "I wish some one would treat him just as he does me, and then he would be punished besides, just as I am. He is too detestable to live, and his mother is a wicked woman to believe all he says. Oh, how I wish I could lie in the ground by my own dear mother, now there is no one to love me!" And she buried her face in the grass in a paroxysm of bitter feeling.

Just then a low voice seemed to breathe over the little girl.

"There is one who loves you even yet."

Fienna started up, and looked about her.

"It was only the sighing of the wind among the trees," she said. "There is no one to love me, now that my dear mother is gone."

But again the soft voice floated over her.

"There is one who loves you well, and will serve you besides."

"Who are you?" exclaimed the little girl in a frightened tone. "I can see no one. Who are you?"

"I am here at your side," replied the invisible speaker; "but you cannot see me, because you have wicked and revengeful thoughts in your heart. Those who look upon me must be sinless and pure, and have no evil feelings, neither wish any ill to others."

"But how can I help having wicked thoughts and wishing bad things to happen to that hateful Fritz, who does nothing but abuse me from morning till night?" replied Fienna, whose mind again reverted to her troubles.

"True, Fritz is very unkind sometimes; but by indulging in these wicked thoughts you will learn to be like him at last; while by being gentle and kind you may make even him love you," returned the voice.

"I don't want Fritz to love me: he is a bad boy, and I cannot bear him," said the little girl sulkily.

"Fienna," spoke the voice once more, and now its tones seemed sad and reproachful, "I must leave you forever if you persist in these sinful feelings, and then you can never be happy. Listen, little girl. Does not the bright sun shine on all alike? When the earth is hard and frozen, and no flowers can be seen, he still smiles kindly down till even the ice thaws beneath his influence, and the flowers bloom again. So kindness and gentle words will in time soften the hardest heart; but revenge and anger, like the bleak north wind, only freeze the ice still harder. If there were no sun there would be no

flowers. Which will you be, Fienna, the sun or the wind? will you be loved or hated?"

Fienna heard these words in silence; gentler thoughts crept over her.

"I will be loved," she murmured; "only teach me how, for there is no one who cares for me now."

"Listen, then," returned the voice. "You must send all these revengeful thoughts and wishes far from you; they are making you sinful and selfish. You must try to do unto others as you would have them do to you; and remembering this, when Fritz acts unkindly, bear with him, and let not an angry retort provoke him to greater evil. Instead of growing sulky and discontented in thinking over your ill treatment, try to deserve better by constant willingness to perform all the duties required of you. And above and beyond all, cherish no malice for the harm done you, but from your heart forgive it. Will you do this, Fienna?"

The voice was inexpressibly sweet and persuasive. It sunk into the heart of the little girl, and the feelings of hatred and ill-will melted before it like frost beneath the warm sunbeams.

"I will try," she said softly; "but I am afraid I cannot do all this when Fritz so constantly provokes me; yet I will try with all my might."

"Do so, my little girl, and you will conquer at last," returned the sweet voice, with an encouraging tone; "but I will not leave you unassisted in your good endeavors. You cannot behold me yet, Fienna; but just where my foot has pressed the turf there will spring up a tuft of white violets: carry them with you, and plant them in a far-off corner of the garden where they can remain. Pluck one each day and hide it in your bosom: it will exhale a sweet fragrance when you bear unkindness meekly, which will fill the hearts of those about you with

kinder and more gentle thoughts, and so in time win all to love you ; and you will then be happy, because all good and unselfish feelings will fill your heart, and drive the evil ones away forever."

As these words floated softly upon the air the little girl felt a slight pressure upon her brow, like the wing of a bird as it brushes the dew from the leaves; and then a calm feeling of repose stole into her breast as she arose from the bank.

She waited a little while for the sweet voice to speak again ; but now all was still, save the soft rustling of the young spring leaves, and the twittering good-night of the birds as they sought their nests, for the sun was fast sinking behind the hills, and the forest shades deepened in the twilight.

Then Fienna knew that the gentle voice was gone; and looking down upon the turf at her side, she saw a tuft of sweet white violets, which certainly were not there

when she first threw herself upon the bank.

The little girl looked upon the spotless white flowers with a feeling of awe, for she remembered the words of the spirit-voice, and knew it was here that the foot of her unseen friend had pressed. She feared to stoop and touch them, and stood awhile in wrapt amazement. But presently she started, for now the evening was coming on, and she knew that a severe reproof awaited her for lingering so long in the woods. Then she thought of the promise the spirit-voice had made to assist her in bearing unkindness, and of the wonderful fragrance the violets would shed around.

"I will take them with me now," she thought. "I shall need all their sweet influence to help me in keeping my resolution; for I know I shall be scolded for staying out so long, and perhaps be sent to bed supperless besides."

She bent over the violets, and their rich fragrance came up refreshingly as she carefully loosened the earth about them, and carried them home. Sure enough, the first words that greeted Fienna upon her return were harsh and upbraiding; and she was told to go to bed at once, as she deserved no supper. True to her resolution, the little girl complied at once without a murmur; and even the gibes and mocking words of Fritz, who met her at the door, aroused no angry look or word in reply. Her heart was full of the fragrance of the violets which she concealed in her apron, and she was meditating how to obtain a chance of planting them unseen.

By and by she heard the garden gate close, and, looking out from her little window, saw Fritz and his mother going down the road. Then she quietly stole down stairs and out into the garden, where, far away in one corner, overgrown with nettles, she carefully

made a place for her tuft of violets, and watered them plentifully, trusting that in this secluded and uninviting spot they would escape all notice.

The pale new moon arose, and peeped over the little girl's shoulder as she pursued her task; and as its soft ray fell upon the white violets, their purity became dazzling to look upon; and they sent up a gush of sweet odor that filled Fienna's heart with a strange sense of peace and good-will.

Fienna arose very early the next morning, and hurried into the garden to see if her precious violets were safe. There they were, seemingly buried amid the nettles, but turning their spotless faces to the sun as if they enjoyed his glowing beam. The little girl dared not linger long; so hastily plucking a flower, she hid it in her bosom and returned to the house.

She then swept up the front yard, and fed the noisy poultry, who were already abroad,

and softly returned to her own little garret to arrange her hair tidily, which she had not before waited to do.

Just as she had finished, she heard the harsh voice of her adopted mother calling on the stairs:

"Come, get up, lazy one! I warrant you would sleep till noon. Be down quickly or you will have no breakfast; and you must need it after losing your supper by your wilful ways."

Fienna made no reply to this, but followed so quickly after the woman that she turned about in surprise; and when she found the poultry fed and yard swept, instead of giving a word of praise she angrily inquired what had made her rise so early.

"She wanted a biscuit from the larder, I guess," answered Fritz, as he now stood near his mother with uncombed hair and his shoes in his hand; "she would not get up so early for nothing."

Fienna felt her color rise at this speech; but she controlled herself, and said:

"I rose early to come into the garden, and as the poultry were about I thought I had better feed them."

"You did right for once, Fienna," replied the woman, in a mollified tone, for she had sought the larder and found her biscuits safe; besides, the fragrance of the white violet stole into her heart as the little girl spoke. "And you, Fritz, had better go and tidy yourself, or no breakfast shall you get in that plight."

Fritz cast an angry scowl upon Fienna, as he slowly obeyed; but the little girl's heart was lightened by those trifling words of kindness, and she performed all her duties so willingly, that she received an extra supply of bread and milk for her breakfast.

Fritz looked upon this unwonted kindness of his mother with an angry brow, and determined to procure the little girl a punish-

ment in some way. All day long he contrived in various ways to annoy her, spilling water upon the clean floor, and slyly removing the pins from the newly washed clothes, so that they should fall in the dirt.

Fienna's patience was severely tried; but the breath of the violet seemed to sustain her; so she wiped up the wet, and rinsed the muddied clothes without a complaint. Fritz saw this unusual conduct with surprise: he had expected the little girl to retort angrily upon him as usual, and then he could easily inflame her anger by taunts and jeers, until his mother interfered, when, by telling falsehoods, the blame and punishment were all awarded to Fienna.

But this day he was disappointed; yet he resolved that the morning's extra supply of bread and milk should be atoned for by the little girl going supperless again, while he enjoyed her portion.

It seemed strange that Fritz should find

so much delight in annoying the poor little girl, and making her unhappy; but he was a cruel, evil-minded boy, like many another, who liked to have something about him on which to vent his wickedness; and Fienna, helpless and unprotected, was a fit victim: there was no one to take her part, and her violent and unavailing expressions of anger and hate amused and delighted him. It certainly seemed a hopeless task to overcome so wicked a heart by kind and gentle means.

When Fienna sat down to her work in the afternoon, he hid her pincushion, and dropped the thread in water; thus delaying her, so that her task could not be accomplished in time to take a stroll in the woods. But the little girl, instead of helplessly crying over her annoyances, dried the thread, and found the pincushion; but despite all her diligence, she could not finish her task much before supper, and only found an

opportunity to water her precious violets before bedtime.

After she was in bed, she thought over all that had happened during the day; and although the fragrance of the violet had not softened Fritz's heart, or inspired him with any feeling of kindness, still it had kept her own rebellious feelings in check: she had not given way to any sinful thoughts, and felt much happier, as she laid her head upon her pillow, than ever she had been before.

The next morning found her again up with the sun, and with the freshly culled violet in her bosom, she again endured the wicked pranks of the tormenting Fritz. His mother was evidently pleased with the unusual change in the little girl, and this only enraged him the more.

It chanced that day Fienna was sent up stairs for his mother's best shawl, as she was going to visit a neighbor; and the wicked

boy contrived to slip the inkstand from the closet and place it just beneath the shawl, which was on a high shelf above. In her endeavor to reach it, the little girl upset the stand, and down poured the black ink over the shawl and herself! Poor Fienna stood a moment in perfect terror at this unexpected mishap. Presently she beheld the malicious face of Fritz peeping at her from behind the door.

"Mother, mother!" he screamed exultingly; "Fienna has ruined your new shawl: come and see!"

His mother came hastily up stairs, and there was the little girl endeavoring to rub the ink-spots from the shawl with her apron, which was in a sad condition also. Without waiting to inquire into the cause of the accident, she gave the unfortunate child a severe box on the ears, pouring forth at the same time all the vilest names she could command, while the wicked author of all the mischief

stood grinning with malicious pleasure at the scene.

Fienna knew that all explanations would be useless; and she really felt so sorry to see the stains upon the new shawl, that her own trouble was forgotten. Perhaps it was the magical fragrance of the violet that led her to assist eagerly in remedying the mischief, despite the abuse that still showered upon her; and though her heart swelled when she saw the wicked joy of Fritz, she passed him without an angry look.

The poor little girl lost both dinner and supper that day, and had extra work given her besides; while Fritz was left at home to torment her when his mother went out.

Fienna sewed steadily away, though the tears flowed down her cheeks, and said not a word in reply to the mockery and sneers of the wicked boy, who was whittling a stick upon the window-seat. Presently he dropped his knife and screamed out with

pain, holding one hand in the other, while the blood slowly trickled through his fingers from a great gash across his palm.

Had this happened a few days before, Fienna would have exulted and told him it served him right, and she was glad of it, without offering to help him; but now the fragrance of the white violet filled her heart; and so raising her eyes from her work, she said, kindly—

"Are you hurt, Fritz? I am sorry."

"That you are not," retorted the boy distrustfully. "I know very well you are glad I cut myself."

Little Fienna made no reply to this rude speech; but getting a piece of soft linen, came up to him and said—

"Let me bind it up for you, Fritz. I will be very careful not to hurt you."

Fritz looked up in some surprise, but ungraciously held out his hand, which the little girl tenderly washed and tied up. He

did not thank her when she had finished, but sat idly drumming his feet against the wall, while she returned to her work. After a while he said—

"I am sorry the ink got spilled on mother's new shawl."

"So am I," replied Fienna, sighing heavily.

"Was it your fault?" asked the boy abruptly.

"You know best, Fritz," returned the little girl gently, and lifting her eyes as she spoke.

The boy was silent a few moments longer.

"I wish mother would give you your supper to-night," he said at last.

"Never mind, Fritz; I can do very well without it," she answered, while a feeling of surprise and pleasure at this unwonted kindness brought tears to her eyes.

She did not know, and neither did the boy himself, that the sweet fragrance of the

violet had stolen into his breast while the little girl bent over him to tie up the wounded hand.

This kindly mood did not long continue; for his mother's increasing kindness to the little girl awakened all the malicious envy of his evil nature, and he only hated her the more: the magic of the violet seemed lost on him. But his mother, who, though harsh and stern, was not hard-hearted, felt softened by the general forbearance and willingness of the little girl. The breath of the violet was insensibly filling her heart with its strange, sweet odor. She condemned less hastily than before, and sometimes even corrected Fritz for his ill-natured tricks.

This change made Fienna much happier, though she still had a great deal to bear from her tormentor; but she never rejoiced when he was reproved, and always spoke kindly and patiently to him, while she

nourished the precious violets with the greatest care.

Fritz, who had watched her going frequently to one corner of the garden, sought out one day the little tuft of violets; and delighted at being able to annoy her at last, he trampled them beneath his feet, and crushed the spotless flowers to the ground.

When Fienna went as usual to gather a violet on the following morning, she beheld them bruised and withered.

"That wicked Fritz has been here and done this!" she exclaimed; and then angry and revengeful words rose to her lips: but as she bent sorrowfully over the crushed violets, they sent forth a gush of fragrance, and her anger melted away in tears.

"My violets, my precious violets!" she cried. "Now you are withered, I shall never be able to keep my temper, and so never be loved after all."

"Why, what are all these tears about?"

asked a voice near her; and looking up with a start, Fienna saw Fritz and his mother.

"This is what brings you out into the garden so early, is it?" she said, while the breath of the charmed flowers insensibly crept into her heart. "Well, I see no use of your hiding your violets here, as though it were a sin to look at them; neither should you have trampled upon them, Fritz: but dry up your tears, silly child; they will grow again, and you shall plant them in a sunny corner—not here among these nettles. It is a foolish fancy, but not hurtful; so dig them up, and plant them in a spot where they will flourish."

Overjoyed at these unexpected words of kindness, Fienna soon complied, and the tuft of violets was replanted in a pleasant spot of the garden, while Fritz was forbidden to touch them upon pain of punishment.

Fritz had looked sorry when he saw

Fienna's grief, and even brought water for her to water the bruised flowers; but when his mother thus openly took her part, and blamed him, his evil nature was aroused again, and he walked sullenly away, intent upon some plan of venting his angry malice.

Meanwhile, Fienna gathered several of the crushed violets that were broken from their stems, and hid them in her bosom, where they exhaled even a sweeter odor from being bruised.

That day was one of comparative comfort to the little girl, for Fritz kept out of the way, and the sweet flowers which she carried in her bosom filled her heart with their charmed influence, while even the mother of Fritz felt their spell.

The wicked Fritz meanwhile had busied himself in tying a strong twine across the path that led to the spot where Fienna had planted her violets, so that when she went after sunset to water her flowers, she might

trip and be thrown down on the rough gravelled walk. But it so chanced that the little girl had permission to go out into the woods that afternoon, and she lingered so long, thinking over the strange adventure with her unseen friend, and hoping again to hear the sweet spirit-voice, that evening had closed in, and the pale stars were seating themselves, one by one, on their thrones in the far-off sky, when she bent her steps homeward.

She did not fear a scolding now, because she had received permission to linger in the woods as long as she chose, as a reward for her diligence and gentleness during the day.

As she entered the garden-gate, she heard a voice moaning sadly, and, though a little frightened, cried out, "Who is there?"

"It is I," answered the voice of Fritz; "I have hurt my leg, and cannot stir."

Fienna ran rapidly up the path from

whence the voice came. It was nearly dark, and the shadows of the trees and shrubs lay heavily upon the ground.

"Where are you, Fritz?" she exclaimed; but just then she saw the boy lying just before her.

"How came you here, and what is the matter? Can't you get up?" she asked anxiously.

"I tell you I can't move," replied the boy impatiently, while he writhed in pain. "I believe I have broken my leg."

Fienna was now very much frightened. She ran to the house, calling loudly for his mother, and then went to a neighbor's to beg assistance in lifting Fritz.

The boy was soon surrounded by a group of neighbors, two of whom lifted him carefully, and carried him to the house, where he was laid upon the bed. He screamed out whenever they moved or touched him, and seemed in great pain.

When the physician came, he said the boy's ankle was broken, and he would perhaps be a cripple all his life. All the long night Fienna and his mother kept watch by his bedside, for he could not sleep for pain, and his moans were distressing to hear.

With the first dawn of daylight little Fienna went softly out into the garden. She felt exhausted and feverish from want of sleep, and the fresh morning air revived her; then she remembered that she had neglected to water her precious violets the evening before, in her alarm about Fritz, and hastening towards the spot where they grew, she saw the string lying across the path. It was just here that Fritz had fallen, and, as she stooped to untie the now broken twine, she could not help the conviction that the boy had set this snare for her, and had strangely enough fallen into it himself. And thus it had happened; for Fritz, running down the path to join a companion,

entirely forgot the string, and caught his foot in it, twisting his ankle beneath him as he fell; and so the evil he had prepared for another returned upon himself.

Fienna was delighted to see her violets quite refreshed, and holding up their heads bravely once more. There were very few flowers left, however, but the buds were plenty. The little girl gathered one fragrant flower, and returned thoughtfully to the house.

For many weeks Fritz was forced to lie in his bed unable to move; and all this time little Fienna was his kind and attentive nurse. The tuft of violets was thriving wonderfully in the sunny spot where she had planted it; and each day a freshly gathered group was placed on a little stand by the bedside of the suffering boy. Their sweet fragrance filled the chamber, and insensibly crept into the heart of Fritz, who had full time now to reflect upon his past conduct.

As he witnessed the untiring and patient kindness of Fienna, and saw how cheerfully, and even tenderly she sought to soothe his anguish and minister to his comfort, a keen feeling of self-reproach and sorrow for all his wickedness came over him; he could not but acknowledge how just it was that he should fall into the snare which he had set for her, and often wondered if Fienna knew what had caused his fall.

Meanwhile the breath of the charmed violets gently fanned these contrite feelings into greater strength, and beneath their sweet and holy influence, he became gentle, patient, and grateful.

His mother saw the change with wonder, while Fienna blessed the precious violets which she felt sure had worked this change, and treasured them with redoubled care.

As Fritz began slowly to recover, he was sitting one day propped up with pillows by the open window; the soft summer air came

soothingly over his brow; a little vase of the sweet white violets stood upon the window-seat, and mingled their rich fragrance with the summer breeze. He could see the very spot where he fell, and the tuft of white violets gleamed like snow-flakes among the green leaves.

Then, as the flowers by his side sent their magical perfume into his heart, a change came over his spirit. The evil feelings of envy and malice fled away, and in their stead came repentance and contrition. He turned with tearful eyes to his mother and Fienna, and, in a subdued and humble voice, told how he had fastened the string to trip the little girl, and had afterwards fallen over it himself; and then he asked Fienna to forgive him, and promised never to tease her any more.

His mother was surprised and indignant at his recital, and began to reproach him severely; but little Fienna looked up in her

face with a pleading smile, and said: "Do not reproach Fritz, because he is sorry, and will never play such tricks again. I found the string the next morning, but I forgave him long ago. And now we will be good friends always, won't we, Fritz?" she added, turning her beaming face towards the boy.

The mother could not resist her gentle pleading. She kissed her son, and begged him to keep his good resolves. Then it was strange, yet delightful, to find what a delicious perfume filled the little chamber, and how the fragrance came wafted even from the tuft of violets away in the garden, and sunk into the hearts of those who were now united in feelings of love and kindness towards each other.

After a time Fritz grew strong, and was able to leave his room. Then it was pleasant to see how tenderly Fienna supported his feeble steps as he slowly limped along

with his crutch, and how gratefully he received her kindness. Fritz never recovered the use of his ankle, but remained a cripple all his life. He loved to assist Fienna in cultivating her violets, and most wondrously they throve beneath the united care of both.

The little tuft spread until it covered a large plat of ground, and the white violets became the admiration of all around; while their rich fragrance floated on the air, and made the atmosphere of Fienna's home.

As time passed on, Fienna delighted in gathering the little children about her, and scattering the sweet white flowers among them, with the inward hope that the rich blessing of their charmed fragrance would shed its holy influence over the hearts of all.

One lovely summer night the young girl went to water her precious bed of violets, and Fritz brought the water from a spring near by. The pale moon shone clear in the

blue sky, and poured a flood of silver light full upon the spotless flowers. As Fienna bent lovingly over them, a soft voice seemed to mingle with their delicious fragrance, and these words were borne on the violet's breath—

"Are you happy now, Fienna?"

"Oh, yes; so very happy!" cried the young girl in a delighted tone; "and to your lovely violets I owe it all, sweet spirit."

"Treasure them, then, with all your care, and through the rough blasts of winter they shall not perish; neither shall their charmed fragrance ever fade from your heart."

As these words died on her ear like the sighing away of a breeze, Fienna was sure that she saw, hovering above the bed of violets, the faint outline of a fairy figure, whose thin robes shone like a silver mist in the pale moonlight; her fair hair was wreathed with white violets, and her soft eyes beamed kindly upon the young girl.

But even as Fienna gazed upon the lovely vision, it faded from her sight; and turning to Fritz, who had just placed the bucket of water at her side, she eagerly asked if he had seen the flower-spirit, or heard her words.

Fritz shook his head and smiled.

"Nay, Fienna, it was but the rustling of the leaves," he said, "and the shimmering of the moonlight among the trees."

Fienna said no more, but she felt a glow of gratitude that the white violets had so far purified her heart, that she might behold, even faintly, the pure flower-spirit who had turned her sorrow into gladness, and her heaviness into joy.

RED-HEADED ANDY.

WHAT should you do were your mother to fall down in a fainting fit? Would you stand still and scream, or run out of the house and leave her lying half dead upon the floor? Or should you have what people call "presence of mind;" that is, call for somebody to help her, and do all you could for her till they came? It is a great thing to have "presence of mind;" there are very few grown people who have it; there are plenty of people, when a bad accident happens, who will crowd round the sick person, keep all the good fresh air away from him, wring their hands, and say oh! and ah! and shocking! and dreadful! but there are few who think to run quickly for the doctor, or

bring a glass of water, or do any one of the thousand little things which would help so much to make the poor sufferer better. If grown people do not think of these things, we certainly should not be disappointed if children do not; and yet, wonderful though it may be, they are often quicker-witted at such time than their elders. I will tell you a story to show you that it is so.

Andy Moore was a short, stunted, freckled, little country boy; tough as a pine knot, and with about as much polish. Sometimes he wore a hat, and sometimes he didn't; he was not at all particular about that; his shaggy red hair, he thought, protected his head well enough. As for what people would think of it—he did not live in Broadway, where one's shoe-lacings are measured: his home was in the country, and a very wild, rocky country it was. He knew much more about chip-munks, rattlesnakes, and birds' eggs than he did about fashions. He

liked to sit rocking on the top of a great tall tree; or standing on a high hill where the wind almost took him off his feet. He thought the sunset, with its golden clouds, "well enough;" but he delighted in a thunder-storm, when the forked lightning darted zig-zag across the heavy black clouds, blinding you with its brightness; or when the roaring thunder seemed to shake the very hills, and the gentle little birds cowered trembling in their nests for fear.

Andy's house was a rough shanty enough, on the side of a hill; it was built of mud, peat, and logs, with holes for windows. There was nothing very pleasant there. His mother smoked a pipe when she was not cooking or washing, and his father was a day-laborer, who spent his wages for whiskey and tobacco. No wonder that Andy liked to rock on the top of tall trees, and liked the thunder and lightning better than the eternal jangling of their drunken quarrels.

Andy could hear the hum of busy life in the far-off villages, but he had never been there. He had no books, so he did a great deal of thinking; and he hoped some day to be something besides just plain Andy Moore, but how or when the boy had not made up his mind. In the mean time he grew, and slept, and ate, and thought—the very best thing at his age that he could have done anywhere, had he but known it.

There was a railroad track near the hut of Andy's father; and Andy often watched the black engine with its long trail, as it came fizzing past, belching out great clouds of steam and smoke, and screeching through the valleys and under the hills like a mad demon. Although it went by the hut every day, yet he had never wished to ride in it; he had been content with lying on the sand-bank, watching it disappear in the distance, leaving great wreaths of smoke curling round the tree-tops.

One day, as Andy was strolling across the track, he saw that there was something wrong about it; he did not know much about railroad tracks, because he was as yet quite a little lad; but the rails seemed to be wrong somehow, and Andy had heard of cars being thrown off by such things.

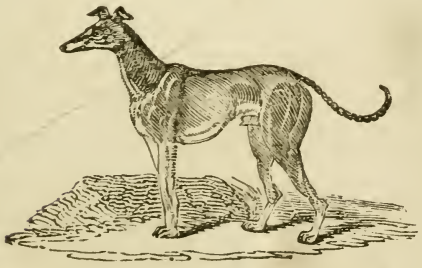
Just then he heard a low, distant noise; dear, dear, the cars were coming—coming then! He was but a little boy, but perhaps he could stop them in some way; at any rate there was nobody else there to do it. Andy never thought that he might be killed himself; but he went and stood right in the middle of the track, just before the bad place on it that I have told you about, and stretched out his little arms as far as he could. On, on came the cars, louder and louder. The engineer saw the boy on the track, and whistled for him to get out of the way; Andy never moved a hair. Again he whistled; Andy might have been made

of stone for all the notice he took of it. Then the engineer, of course, had to stop the train, swearing, as he did so, at Andy for "not getting out of the way;" but when Andy pointed to the track, and he saw how the brave little fellow had not only saved his life but the lives of all the passengers, his curses changed to blessings very quickly. Everybody rushed out to see the horrible death they had escaped, had the cars rushed over the bad track, and tossed headlong down the steep bank into the river. Ladies kissed Andy's rough, freckled face, and cried over him; and the gentlemen, as they looked at their wives and children, wiped their eyes and said, "God bless the boy!"

And that is not all; they took out their portemonnaies, and contributed a large sum of money for him. Not that they could ever repay the service he had done them, they knew that; but to show him, in some way besides mere words, that they felt grateful.

Now THAT boy had presence of mind. Good, brave, little Andy! The passengers all wrote down his name, Andy Moore, and the place he lived in; and if you want to know where Andy is now, I will tell you.

He is in college; and these people whose lives he saved pay his bills, and are going to see him safe through. Who dare say now, when a little jacket and trousers runs past, "It is only a boy?"



ONCE ANGRY.

IT is a long, long time ago; so long, that, sitting here this morning, and looking back on it, I am half tempted to believe it is all a dream; just as you, dear little children, will half believe sometimes that the loves, and joys, and sorrows of this present, which make up your lives, were dreams, only dreams.

It was in the summer, and the day was bland and beautiful. We lived in a great, old-fashioned white house, with a deep-green lawn lying in front, shaded with clumps of lilacs and syringas, while several peach-trees brushed all the year against the window-panes.

Our mother had gone to New York on a visit, and we were very lonely—my little sister, Eloise, and I—so we wandered uneasily through the great rooms of the old house and out into the long garden, where rows of gooseberry and currant-bushes grew by the fences—where the great apple-tree shook down its blossoms thick as snow-flakes every summer, and the damsons grew purple among the dark leaves every autumn.

But, as I said, we were lonely, and very restless, and, after wandering through the garden, we came at last into the front yard, and sat down among the grass, for we had nothing to do, as it was Saturday, and there was no school that day.

At last I spoke up suddenly, in a sort of desperation, "Eloise, you see that peach-tree, with the great branch broken off from its trunk? I'm going to climb up that tree."

She opened her large, gray-blue eyes upon my face. "Oh, you can't, Fannie!" she said, wonderingly. "The tree's so high; what if you should fall and get hurt or killed?"

"Oh, I sha'n't, either," I answered vehemently. "You see that broken branch makes such a nice step to commence with, and then I can get hold of those lower boughs with one hand, and cling fast to the trunk with the other, and so manage to lift myself up. (You perceive I had a very slight practical knowledge of climbing.) It will be so delightful to get up there where the winds sing all day, and the little birds peep out from their nests. Then I can tell you all about it, you know, when I come down."

She did not demur any longer, for my description had greatly stimulated her curiosity, and we both hurried off to the tree. I prepared to ascend, not doubting in any-

wise my ultimate success. I managed, after many efforts, and almost exhausting my strength, to get as far as the broken branch, but, looking up, the place where the soft wind sang, and the little birds grew up in their nests, hidden among the green leaves, seemed as far off as ever.

"You'll never get up there, Fannie; I know you couldn't," said Eloise, as I made an ineffectual attempt to get hold of the lowest bough, which still swung too far above me.

"Yes I will too; see if I don't, Eloise," I retorted, and winding one arm around the trunk, to maintain my somewhat doubtful equilibrium, I made still stronger efforts to grasp the bough with the other. I succeeded at last; but my head swam, my feet slipped, and, with a severe bruise on my ankle, I fell at whole length to the ground.

My little sister did not know how acutely

my ankle pained me; and altogether my sudden descent must have been quite a ludicrous spectacle, and for the moment this struck her forcibly. She clapped her hands, and laughed out gleefully, "There, Fannie, didn't I tell you you'd never get up in the tree? Oh, how funny you did look coming down flat on the ground!"

Did you ever have any one laugh at you, when you were suddenly hurt or disappointed? Almost every one knows there is nothing so trying to one's nerves and temper. I was stung with mortification at my defeat, and my sister's laugh seemed, in my excitement, to mock and exult over this.

I rose up quickly, angrily, hardly conscious of what I was doing, though the pain in my ankle grew severer every moment, and I struck her fiercely with my clenched hand, blow after blow—it might be for the space of half a minute.

I still can see the look of wonder that settled into her large eyes; then her face fell, her lips quivered, and the tears broke over her cheeks; but she stood still; she did not shriek or scream.

The sight of these tears recalled me to myself. My hands dropped, the anger went out from my heart, as a sharp pang of remorse went in. "Oh, Eloise, Eloise!" I cried, "what have I done?"

But she only sobbed the harder, and every sob was a terrible reproach to me.

"I didn't mean to, indeed I didn't," I said, self-convicted, and standing like the culprit I felt before her. "I was *mad*, I guess; something came over me, and I couldn't help it."

"See here, now, what's all this crying about?" called out a neighbor, who had been attracted by the cry, putting her head out of her kitchen-door.

"Fannie's been striking me," answered Eloise, betwixt her tears.

"Well, she's a naughty girl, and I shall just go over and tell Biddy to keep her in the house all day," was the sharp rejoinder. Eloise turned and looked at me, and a ray of pity stole through the great tears that stood in her eyes.

"She didn't mean to hurt me. It was because I laughed at her. Please don't tell, *Miss* Hughes," she called out to the woman, who was preparing to execute her threat at once.

"Well, I'll let you off this time, if you'll promise never to do such a thing again," was the lady's ultimatum to me.

Of course I made the promise, and she disappeared within her own door; and then Eloise and I sat down on the long, soft grass.

My little sister's generosity had made me doubly repentant. I wound my arms around

her, and said, very humbly, "It was *so* kind of you, Eloise, not to let her tell Biddy, and I was a very wicked girl to strike you so. Won't you forgive me?"

And she lifted up her little dainty lips, that always looked like a red rose when it is just breaking through the calyx, and kissed my cheek.

And then I cried for joy that we had "made up."

This was the first and the last time that I ever struck my sister; and even now, through all the years that lie between, my heart smites me for the pain I caused her then. She has gone now, where there is no more pain or weeping, walking among the white meadows, listening to the soft flowing of the springs, that keep green forever the gardens of heaven; while I, walking still among the valleys, look up sometimes, and feel that an angel is smiling on me from the hills, where

the "redeemed" walk in their white garments.

Little children, remember what I have said, lest the "*once angry*" shall haunt you also in the "to-come."

THE

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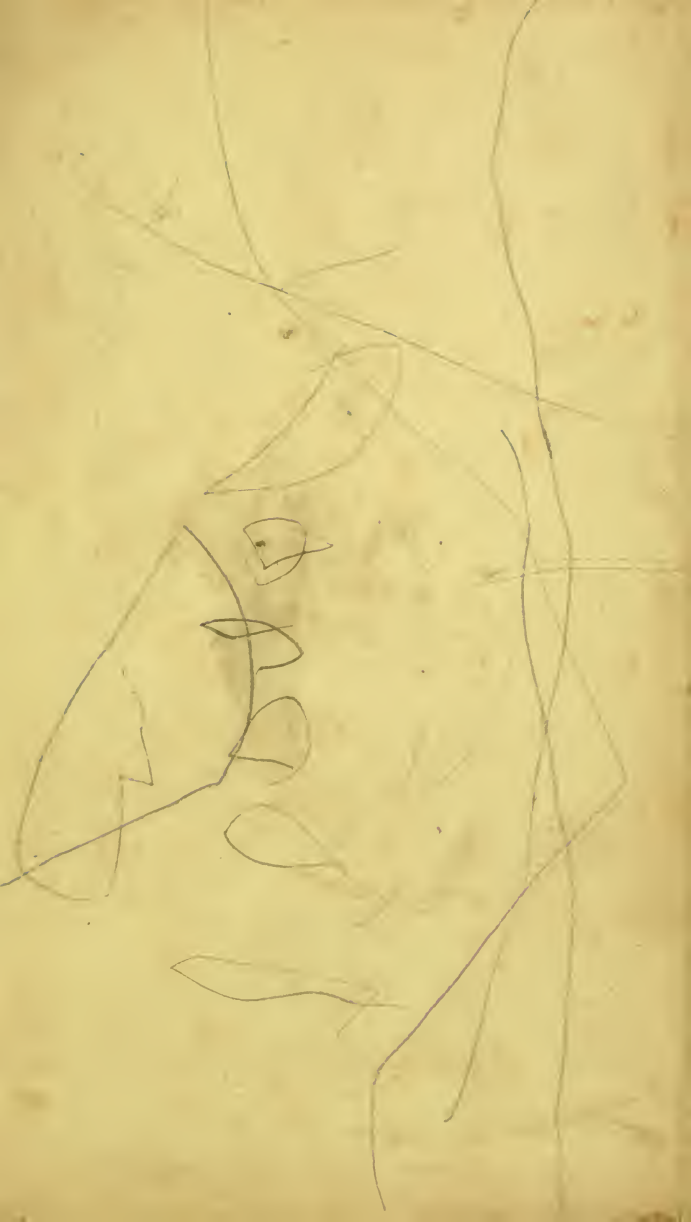
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